Welcome to your Students Association magazine

CONFERENCES 2018
FIND OUT WHAT’S HAPPENING AT THE BIGGEST EVENT OF THE YEAR!

ELECTIONS 2018
WHO DID YOU VOTE IN AS YOUR NEW CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE?

CHARTER DAY
HOW WE CELEBRATED THE OPEN UNIVERSITY’S BIRTHDAY

CARER’S WEEK
WHAT IS IT AND WHAT IS THE ASSOCIATION DOING?

OU STUDENT STORY
Find out what a difference The Open University makes...

VOLUNTEER RESEARCH
An exciting opportunity for our Students Association student volunteers

OU STUDENT BLOG
Our student observer tells us what happened when they attended a CEC weekend
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Welcome to this edition of OU Students magazine...

What a year it’s been so far!
Here at #OUstudentsHQ we’re celebrating the end of the elections process and looking forward to working from the new student leadership team from 1 August. It’s also been a time to reflect on the great things that the current team have accomplished.

Now Conference 2018 is just around the corner, and we can’t wait for you to see what’s planned! Check out page 6 to see photos from Conferences past, and page 7 to find out how you can enjoy the event festivities – even if you didn’t get a place.

Hear from Deputy President, Julia, on page 8 – we’ve got the speech she delivered on Charter Day on OU campus. Also, get some brilliant advice from student Catherine on balancing exercise, life and study on page 10.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the magazine – we’ll see you in September. Is it too early to mention Freshers yet?!

All the best,
The Editorial team

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**President**  
Cath Brown

**Deputy President**  
Stephanie Stubbins

**Vice President Student Support**  
Alison Kingan

**Vice President Media and Campaigns**  
Fanni Zombor

**OU Council member**  
Barbara Tarling

**Vice President Community**  
Kat Cramond

**Faculty Association Representatives**  
Billy Docherty, Bea Fontes, Sarah Jones, Claire Davey

**Vice President Education**  
Peter Cowan

**Area Association Representatives**  
Mark Cameron, Michail Kasoutas, Danielle Smith, Wendy June Reid, Lucy (Lu) Richardson

**Vice President Equality and Diversity**  
Cherry Day

**Board of Trustees**  
Nicola Simpson  
Alison Kingan  
Peter C Bell  
Caroline Cowan  
Claire Wallace

**Vice President Student Voice**  
Amelia Gackowska

Find out more about the elections and the full results on our [website](#)
Conference is coming...

Missed out on a place? Don’t worry!

Sign up for our Conference ballot is coming to a close, but if you missed out on a place at Conference or as a Digital Delegate, don’t worry!

You can still get a flavour of Conference 2018 in the following ways:

The conversation will be flowing on our @OUstudents Twitter account and you can join the chat using the hashtag #OUstudents18.

Like our Facebook page and watch regular STUDIO radio broadcasts live from the OU campus. Our student hosts will keep you updated and entertained! You don’t need a Facebook account in order to watch these.

We’ll be posting some fantastic pictures from the weekend on our Instagram account (@oustudentslive).

Watch videos and broadcasts on the Media section of our website.

Chat to students on our online forums.

After the Conference you will be able to find out more about what happened at Conference, what decisions were made, and how you can volunteer and get more involved in the Association.

Best overheard #OUstudent comment: ‘If we knew it all we wouldn’t need to learn it!’
Charter Day 2018

This year the Open University celebrated 49 years and the theme of Charter Day was Proud @ 49. The celebration consisted of inspiring speeches from OU staff, VIP guests and OU students. Included in these presentations was Julia Davis, Deputy President of the OU Students Association, who talked about OU students being the ‘beating heart of the OU’. Just in case you missed Charter Day here is Julia’s speech, we hope you find it inspiring and remember if you would like to share your OU story we would always love to hear it! Read Julia’s speech:

“Hi everybody, lovely to see you all today. I am going to start my talk in a rather unorthodox way because Sue Broome suggested a starting note for my talk which I’ve gone with which is about the students being the beating heart of the University.

Very recently I have become absolutely obsessed with doing exercise in the evening. I have three sons all who drive me crazy in all sorts of different ways. My eldest son has autistic spectrum disorder and it’s very severe. He’s lovely, he’s wonderful but it does drive me to the edge of sanity. So I’m doing exercise called Insanity which makes my heart beat to the level where I think ‘am I going to be alright?!’ I’m on the carpet when I’ve finished the exercise. But I was thinking about it, that actually it’s something about getting over difficult times and actually sticking with something which can make you feel really proud, so that’s how I am linking into my Open University studies.

My background is as a mental health nurse. I’ve worked in every single field within that arena over the past 10 years. You name it, I’ve probably done it. I loved it but I’ve got another interest. At the age of 15 I was into attending protests to do with the environment and reclaiming the streets and all of that. I’ve always had a great passion for nature. So while studying as a mental health nurse I did, very slowly, complete a Masters in Environmental Decision Making. I found it a great escape from what I was doing in the daytime, to think about matters that were global in nature and quite complex. It really brought me to life. I have had some situations during my OU studies where my heart has almost burst with frustration. When I was about to submit my dissertation the document
was so massive that my Lenovo laptop that was really bad and almost giving up and I actually cried trying to submit this thing. So when I actually got my MSc I was really proud of myself. I felt fantastic about that.

With my studies it has led me on to be really interested in innovation. For some reason I’ve always been really annoyed by wires. I just don’t like them. There’s something about that I’m really interested in pursuing. So I’m now studying engineering.

I’m obsessed by study. But what I have found, whether it’s being a student or with the Deputy President role, that because I’ve got a really chaotic life, with study I’ve always had to find a window to study or a window to do the Deputy President role. So with my son with autism he is obsessed with drawing. So I might have 100s of drawings on the table. So in the evening I have to go swipe and say I’m concentrating on this now. I found that by keeping that way of doing things has gotten me through and been really effective.

So going on now to the Students Association and with the thread of the heart of the Students Association, I feel really proud of everybody that is part of that organisation. Everybody that’s involved holds the heart of the University, the values of what it’s about and the integrity. Every single person that I’ve met there has such passion and enthusiasm for it in all sorts of different ways. It feels like everyone knows more than I do because I’ve only been in elected office for a few months, but I’ve been really proud to have been involved in that as well. Some of the people that are involved with the Association, like myself, have their own life challenges. There are people that have said to me it’s what propels them to get out of bed in the morning and it really gives them that feeling of pride to be involved with the OU and with the Students Association. I was thinking about that. Everybody here has their own personal struggle and how in a way that’s comparable to the struggle of the University and what it’s going through. Actually it’s one of those things we all experience and the University is just a bigger example of that. Then that led me to thinking who hasn’t had quite a lot of life experience by 49? I’m not there yet but I think by the time I get there I know I’m going to have a lot!

So I think again just to send out that really encouraging message for us to continue forward during this difficult time and its meandering paths and us not knowing necessarily where exactly it is all leading. So, I would also say that the Association may be something that a lot of people haven’t heard about. I know when I was studying and doing nursing, I did not pay any attention to the Students Association. It felt like it was so precise, the amount of time I had to give to work and study, that I had no knowledge of that particularly. I do feel that even if people don’t know about the Association, it is like the beating heart and it keeps that regular beat, it just keeps things keeping on. The Association members ask the important questions that need to be asked of the University.

Just to end that whilst I think the Association and the students do represent the heart of the University obviously the heart relies on the rest of the body and the other organs to be also functioning well. So I look forward to the University’s 49th birthday and being part of it for many more years to come. Thank you.”

Julia Davis
Deputy President
I am a final year law student at the Open University. I study my degree full time, work full time as a Commercial Paralegal and train for weightlifting competitions. Juggling the three is difficult but completely do-able and very rewarding. They actually complement each other well and this is how I manage them all:

1. It was fundamental to find a routine which worked for me. It doesn’t matter whether you study/work/train in the morning, afternoon or evening as there is no secret recipe to the perfect routine. What does matter is understanding how your individual mind and body works and utilising this information in the best way possible to gain the most productivity in each 24 hour day. This may require trial and error but once you have a routine which suits you then you’re sorted for the long term. A year ago I laughed at the idea of getting up any earlier than 8am, then I tried it one day and it was the best decision I made because I found out that it worked for me.
My typical weekday routine consists of; waking up at 5am and studying until 7am, training in the gym between 7am and 8am, head to the office and eat breakfast whilst reading the news, work between 9am and 5pm with an hour lunch break which includes a 20 minute walk and 40 minutes of studying and eating, after work I eat, shower and pack etc. then study between 6:00pm and 8:00pm, 1 hour to do some blogging or have family time and then sound asleep by 9pm (that is roughly 22 hours of study during the week). I still wake up at 5am on the weekends and get 4 hours of study in by 9am (totalling a minimum of 30 hours of study a week) and then I practically have the whole weekend with a break away from work and study. I also have the option to do social things in the evenings of weekdays and have the capacity to make up the study time on the weekends.

2. Once you have found a good routine, learn the skill of adapting. There is not a single week which goes exactly to the dot as I have laid out above. There have been days where I have had very little sleep, or my nutrition is off point, or someone is using the equipment I want or I’m feeling sluggish and don’t want to lift. I could use these reasons as an excuse as to why I didn’t lift that day or I can accept that my conditions aren’t perfect and adapt and do the best that I can do for that day. Building this strong mentality in the gym has significantly improved my ability to study independently. My environment for studying may not be perfect because the neighbours are making lots of noise or I had a particularly stressful day at work or I’m having to study on a busy train but I will adapt and I will study the best I can that day, just as I would perform the best I can in the gym for that day.

3. Don’t underestimate the importance of nutrition and sleep. My initial approach was to try to do as much as possible for as long as possible. I would have my law books open on one half of the table and I’d be trying to design my gym programme on the other half of the table. I also went to bed late but the lack of sleep meant I had to reread study material excessively because it wasn’t sinking into my brain. It doesn’t matter how much time you dedicate to a task if you spend 80% of that time procrastinating about it because of lack of interest or energy. Furthermore, nutrition extends way further than the gym. For example, eating quick-releasing carbs will give you a quick burst of energy and you may be able to bash out 20 minutes of high quality study but then your sugar levels will drop and the next 20 minutes will be sluggish study. It is so important to eat a well-balanced diet to be able to study at an optimal level.

It is also inefficient to be worrying about something in the future. For example, when I’m studying I won’t be thinking about what I’m going to be doing in the gym later, I deal with that when I get to the gym. This enables me to have a completely fresh mind when I come back to reading the books or when I return to the barbell or the office. What I’m trying to say is work smarter, not longer. Delegate tasks, sleep more and eat well so that you can achieve more in less time.

4. When you go through a phase of when things are tough, because they will at times, remember that it won’t last forever. It is temporary and there is light at the end of the tunnel. My coach said some wise words to me, “the tough times make the good times that much better”. I would also say that you grow as a person and become mentally stronger when you overcome these hurdles. It is good to have peers to talk to who understand what you are going through, which may not be your loved ones. So, reach out to your tutors, the Association team and fellow students. Don’t dwell on your issues and allow them to consume you further, instead explain to others how you are feeling and what actions you are going to take to overcome your problem.

Catherine Howell
OU student
For me, the Central Committee Representative Seminar held at Kents Hill on 27-28 April, actually started out a day for Teaching Committee meetings. Thursday evening was spent attending the PubPhd event in the OU bar - A fascinating evening, where I bumped into Nigel Patterson (a fellow Volunteer) at the event, and fun was had challenging and heckling OU PhD students.

The beginning of the Seminar on Friday morning was spent with a getting to know each other session. On my table was Paul Allatson, Rory Powell and Catherine Howell. I shared a table with Catherine at 2017 Central Committee Rep Seminar and it was lovely to catch up with her. There was an insightful presentation from the OU Governance Team telling us about the governance structure from Council down to Teaching Committees. The afternoon was spent in teams discussing mock committee papers before being sent into a mock committee meeting to discuss the differing position we were asked to take. Sandra Summers chaired our mock meeting and I opted to ask some difficult questions of the chair. We finished off Friday with a moving speech from Patrick Johnson, a newer representative to the team, with further briefings from Barbara Tarling about being on Council, and Sandra Summers about Quality Assurance.

Friday evening, I opted to take the motorbike down to a renowned bike café in North London, before re-joining everyone in the bar afterwards. Much of our social chat was occupied by events of late and the upcoming OU Student Association elections.

Saturday, our table was joined by the Association President Nicci Simpson. There was group work thinking about the different ways research can be utilised at the Association and the OU’s Peter Taylor gave a fantastic presentation about the OU Boards of Study. Later discussion was had about communications between CCR’s and Central Executive Committee followed by reflections of the weekend and goodbyes.

It was great to meet new CCR’s, lovely to catch up with others, and sad to say goodbye to some as their OU journey comes to an end.

Owen Cave
Central Committee Representative

Central Rep Seminar 2018
Students share their experience...
if possible - and keep reminding them to the relevant university bodies.

The Seminar was useful to new and old alike and every year the office staff think of ways to get everyone out of their comfort zones, speak to people and in front of people. There was a presentation of the OU Governance so that we know the structure we have to fight against! There was also a presentation on Board of Studies, their position, role and absolute importance in the University structure. Such presentations give an insight of how things work and how issues are travelling through the University and where the volunteers meet them, sometimes repeatedly and sometimes not so often.

There was the usual committee skills session made more appealing with the controversial topics/papers to report from and from a certain point of view! The new qualification, Soap Opera BA, was a hit even if all the modules were compulsory! (no registrations please – fictitious qualification) In the student-led mini sessions fellow volunteer and new student Patrick took us through the start of his journey with the OU. He sounded adequately happy for a newbie both as a student and a CCR.

Pooja from the office informed us on Students Association led research and its worth. When Nigel questioned it (usual Nigel), he managed to produce helicopter taking off sounds with the microphone, making everyone relax at the prospect of having to chip into the research exercise. The office stressed the importance and the necessity of good communications between the various layers of student representation and how the lack of it could potentially harm or delay taking student issues forward.

The weather was helpful too – cold, rainy and windy – which kept us indoors without complaining and focusing on the Seminar business that continued into the bar upstairs in the evenings.

Nicky Hadjipanteli
Central Committee Representative

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Volunteering opportunities!

Many thanks to everyone who’s coming to Conference this year and indicated they’d love to volunteer! We were overwhelmed with the response and if anyone didn’t get to help in the role they wanted, why not head over to our website and look at our volunteering opportunities?

We’re currently looking for more Central Committee Representatives. They act on behalf of the wider student body and attend the OU committee meetings they’re appointed to. You can do some of this role from home as it does require about an hour a week to read papers and contribute to forum discussions prior to meetings.

We’re also asking for expressions of interest for Student Forum Moderators and Learner Experience Representatives so do fill out the form on the website if you’d like to find out more.

Soon, we’ll be relaunching our Peer Support service, so look out for more information including the role description coming soon!
Celebrate our student volunteers with #SpotlightSunday

Did you know you can nominate a student volunteer who goes the extra mile for other students for #SpotlightSunday?

We love to celebrate the hard work all our volunteers do, as we appreciate they all have busy lives!

#SpotlightSunday shout outs can be seen on our Facebook and Twitter social media platforms and the nominee gets one of our #teamOUstudents mugs.

You can see previous #SpotlightSunday nominees on the volunteering pages of the website. And while you’re there, and as we come into Volunteers’ Week 2018, why not nominate that special student volunteer you know?

Nominate a volunteer who has gone above and beyond oustudents.com/spotlight-on-volunteers 

#teamOUstudents
What a difference the OU makes!

The Open University makes a huge difference in people’s lives - it can help everyone gain a degree no matter if you have a family, working, or are disabled - it offers everyone support. I’m a disabled student and The Open University has helped me with my journey. I started on 1 October 2014 and had a rough few years that followed, but had amazing support from my tutors which I’m eternally grateful to.

I will be finishing my BA/BSc (Open) Hons degree in May /June 2019. But my journey isn’t even over yet, as I will be returning to start my master’s degree in October 2019. The Open University makes everyone’s dream come true. The support it offers is amazing, and I’m proud to say that I’ve studied with The Open University. It has helped me gain qualification’s I never thought I would achieve, and doesn’t discriminate either. The OU takes everyone as a unique person and helps them to grow and succeed in whatever field they want to go into.

I’m currently working my way into midwifery and nursing and also taking counselling on. I’ve enjoyed everything I’ve have learned and I would highly recommend The Open University if someone was to ask me. It does make a huge difference in everyone’s lives.

Thank you to the Student Voice team for letting me have my voice heard, it’s been a pleasure seeing how you also help students. Volunteering with the Association as an Learning Experience Rep has given me the confidence to be able to help make sure other students have their voice heard, as it is important for OU students to be heard.

The Student Voice team does an amazing job, in helping other students to see they are not alone when studying. There is always someone out there willing to listen. Whether it is to do with their studies or if they feel they are struggling in general, they can turn to someone for the support. The Student Support team in The Open University are so friendly to approach it makes people feel at ease and to know when you call them someone will be waiting to help on the other end. The Student Voice team and volunteers are doing an amazing job and I hope that all the new students who have started in February and ones starting in October will see that they will never be alone - as long as their voice can be represented. Student Voice does make a difference. We may not see changes straight away, but by the end support really benefits students.

I would also love to thank everyone who has pushed me in my very own journey. I had a brilliant first year in 2014, but 2015 I lost my Nan just before starting my second first level 1 - and also nearly lost my life due to getting very ill. But The Open University, OU Students Association and Student Support Team helped even after death of other family members in 2018.

I’ve still fought back to show I can, and will progress - so I wanted to use this opportunity to let others know although it’s hard, it is well and truly worth the journey. I’m hoping when people read about my own experience they will be able to approach the Student Voice team and make their story heard. I’m hoping this will be seen by everyone at The Open University, the Association and by my tutors to show them how they have made a huge difference in my life and journey. So if you’re sitting there thinking I’d love to do some volunteering - then I’d say contact the Association they will be able to help. I hope you all enjoy reading this I’ve put all my effort into making sure it’s what I’d want people to read.

Good luck with your own OU journeys, and good luck to everyone starting exams and also EMAs.

Hannah Jayne Profit
Learner Experience Representative.

Join in!
Get involved in the conversation on Twitter @OUstudentsVoice
I was given the chance to attend the Central Executive Committee meeting with the Students Association. Arriving on the Friday afternoon I had a mix of anxiety and excitement about the weekend. The large envelope of papers waiting for me really hit home the amount of work ahead. Friday’s evening meal was a great chance to meet up with the people I knew as well as meet new people. This was a good ice breaker before our first Committee session.

At the start of the first session the observers received a warm welcome from the President on behalf of the Committee. I can honestly say with the exception of voting it was the only time any difference was made between observers and Committee members. I was not sure what to expect as an observer. Would it be the case of sitting on the side observing or being encouraged to participate? I was pleasantly surprised at the level of participation we had, which really allowed the experience to be meaningful.

The sheer amount of work on the agenda, the discussions that took place, items to consider and reports developed by both Committee members and Association staff was more than I ever anticipated. Every member had clearly kept up to date with the workload and was keen to share their views on each item. As an observer I was given the same level of respect and participation as full members. I was able to express my views on the topics and join in the discussions. This not only helped me with my anxiety but I felt an increase with my confidence as the weekend progressed.

On my long drive home on the Sunday I was thinking about what I learned from the weekend, as well as what I observed as an observer. What I observed was a committee whose passion, commitment, determination and drive was felt throughout the weekend. It was clear that at the heart of the Association is the students. Making sure each student feels that they have a voice, feel encouraged, have the appropriate support and are fully respected and represented throughout their learning journey.

I would encourage students to take up the
chance to come along as an observer to the Committee. I have left feeling encouraged to do more with The Association and also to participate more in building a bigger and stronger OU student community.

Thank you to all the Central Executive Committee members, Association staff and OU staff for giving me such a valuable and meaningful experience.

Billy Docherty

My dear colleagues, I have the pleasure to give you some more information about my weekend with Central Executive Committee of the Students Association.

I spent two wonderful days in Milton Keynes at the Kents Hill Park Conference Centre as an observer from a Society. I got an invitation from the Association and I booked few days off in my diary. The days were run smoothly by the Students Association with a good plan for the full day and plenty of information previously prepared.

Saturday was very intense with a lots of project information and wider discussion about transition and we were invited to take part in workshops. We were discussing about strategy and better communication and greater use of social media. There was also further debate about policy. Our staff members were in detail, explaining the understanding and use of complicated terms and the purpose of using different platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

There was information and discussion about nominations and voluntary work for Students Association. The Elections soon will be another process that is required if you are aiming to be the part of student representation team. It is always a bit of political aspect of being nominated by others or nominating yourself. Because you can use your enthusiasm and give a bit of voluntary time, it will give you experience on wider cooperation and it will make you feel more confident.

There were lots of different questions and discussions on different issues. Having a chat with our leadership team is very helpful with proper understanding of peer support for example.

Students were welcome in the Conference Centre that was previously booked by Students Association representatives. During a week you can learn a lot and observe a lot. Very important issues were discussed during our days at Kents Hill such as bullying. It is important to recognise the fact that our students are facing problems and need help with conflict resolution. It is also very important to understand that they are not alone with questions and asking for a bit of support. We have an excellent board and tools for these type of situations.

An important project that was discussed on our panel was also about system support that will deliver our students towards success. And this is all what we are aiming for! At the end of my observation I would like to say it was great to be a part of our Central Executive Committee. The weekend was very informative and professional. I would like to add if someone is inviting you to Conference you should go because they are there for you! You can always raise a hand with your voice or questions and comments!

Students that have been involved longer with Association are very friendly and supportive. The weekend was great, thank you very much for giving me that experience!

Thanks, and see you all around!

Anna

Read the reports
Our Central Executive Committee (student leadership team) all submit reports about their work. You can read those [here](#).
11-17 June
Carers Week

Keep an eye out on social media for #CarersWeek activity.

Check out www.oustudents.com for more information
Chatting with the OU Students Carers Club

Since launching in March 2018, the OU Students Association now has 10 official clubs, all set up by your fellow students!

John Stead, one of the founders of the OU Students Carers Club, was recently interviewed giving insight into the club. Read their story below.

Being a carer for your mum and studying as well must have been a challenge at times. How did you manage to do both and have you any tips for others in a similar situation?

I did not take breaks between modules or at Christmas or Easter but studied continuously. If I got behind I focused on what was needed for the next TMA. I ignored the study guides and just went through the workbooks and DVDs. I read a little and then focused on the TMAs and each year I put in a big effort for the EMA. I didn’t do any modules that had an exam.

How did OU Carers Group start up and become an OU Club?

I became Facebook friends with Paula Elsley and we grumbled that there was no support for OU carers. Then right away we decided to do more than just grumble we decided to set up a group. OU Students Association wrote and suggested we join their newly launched OU Clubs and we did so. With that recognition and a lot of hard work now shared by three as Claire Murray had now joined Paula and I as an admin success followed with increased numbers and participation by members on a regular basis.

What kind of things do people like to do in the OU Carers Club?

Each week one of the admins sets a question and invites comments; also each week the group photo is changed with input from members on what is shown. Besides this we support each other over difficulties with caring and problems with keeping up with our studies. It has been said that we are all great friends and just like one big happy family.

The membership has grown to 70 members. Where do you advertise for new members?

Of course being an OU Students Association sponsored club has helped and additionally we advertise in the Open University Facebook Group and also on Twitter. We hope to continue growing for some time yet.

In what ways have you benefited from being part of the Carers Group?

Firstly I have made a number of new friends and in particular the other two Admins of the Carer's Group Paula and Claire. Secondly, setting up the group has honed my planning and organisational skills. Last but by no means least interacting with and being supported by all the other group members has been really therapeutic for me. I feel less stressed and more able to care for my mother successfully.

Thank you to the OU Carers Club founder John for sharing the story behind OU Carers. You can become a member by joining their Facebook group.
New project for Student Carers in Wales

The Open University in Wales is running a new project to identify and share best practice in supporting students who have caring responsibilities.

The project aims to:
• find out more about the needs of student carers
• offer specific support to carers to improve recruitment, completion, retention, progression and employability.
• help to inform university wide policy around best practice and systems for supporting carers.

Project Manager Gayle Hudson explains how the project is working:
“We have been working with the OU Students Association and student carers to develop a student carers pack. This information pack for carers covers the areas of help and support carers can expect from the OU. It also includes a section of ‘top tips’ from other student carers, information from the OU Students Association, careers support and signposting to other sources of help from organisations across Wales.”

Through Carers Week (11-17 June), the OU in Wales will be running a series of online forums and discussion groups with student carers to discuss how to develop the project further and provide more support for students with caring responsibilities.

Although this project is currently running in Wales, the learning will be shared across the UK.

If you would like to be involved in the forums and discussion groups running in June, or if you would like more information please email us.

The carers pack can be downloaded at www.open.ac.uk/wales/carers
Societies

Find a society that interests you... or set one up with our help...

Joining or starting a society is a great way to meet other OU students and to further enrich your OU study.

Societies are an essential part of every student’s university life and it’s no different for students of the Open University. Joining a society can help you to feel part of the community, give you a sense of belonging to your University and keep you in touch with what other students are thinking, feeling and doing.

All affiliated societies are listed on the Association website and there are over 20 to choose from. If you can’t find a society that interests you, maybe you can set up a new one? We can help get your potential society promoted and we’ll send you a set of guidelines to help you along the way.

Please contact us through the central societies mailbox and we will get back to you with further details.

Affiliated and Emerging Societies

- Ballet & Opera Society
- Central Regions Arts Club
- Change Ringers Society
- Dr Turing Society
- Engineering For Humanity
- Entrepreneurs Society
- Fusion (Physics) Society
- History Society
- Law Society
- M500
- Mountaineering Society
- Music Society
- OU Alchemy
- OU Business Associate Society
- OU Poets
- OUDES (Development & Environment)
- Psychological Society
- Robotics Club
- Shakespeare Society
- Society of the OU Philosophers
- Students for Ethical Science
- Tadpoles Society
- Write Club
If you have concerns about animals suffering from their use in education and research, Students for Ethical Science shares your concerns. As an Open University student society affiliated to the OU Students Association we aim to peacefully persuade the OU to replace its harmful use of animals with academically equivalent or superior non-harmful alternatives. The good news is that undergraduate students are able to study Life Sciences without their participation directly harming animals.

Replacing harmful animal use in research involves scientific and legal considerations. Current scientific practices and regulations governing medical research, drug and toxicity testing are based on the assumption that validating outcomes in humans depends on outcomes in non-human species. This gives us the scientifically problematic situation that, even where a drug or treatment targeted for use in humans is developed exclusively using humans and human tissue, it is required, by law, to be tested using non-human animals before it can be released or marketed for general use in humans.

European Union directives specify the legal requirements for the use of non-human animals for testing treatments, drugs and toxicity. That is, these legal requirements are part of the regulations and standards imposed on EU member states to enable them to trade freely with one another. See our website.

The effect of Brexit on the use of animals in research, and on research generally, in the UK will depend on the UK’s final deal with the EU on leaving. It will also depend on the nature of the UK’s trade deals with non-EU countries after Brexit. A major part of trade deals is agreement on standards and regulations. This not only has implications for animal welfare and the use of animals in research, but will also affect intellectual property rights, risking greater restrictions on the ability to access and share the content of research papers. This is further complicated by trade negotiations taking place in secret, enabling corporations to have a controlling influence on trade terms away from public scrutiny.

Our forum, OU Students Association Ethical Science, is open to all current OU students for the discussion of science and ethics of animal use, animal intelligence and animal welfare or to talk to us and ask questions.

By joining us, you would: have access to our members’ forum on our website, help to give weight to our voice with the OU in support of animal welfare, learn about the ethics and science of animal use, have the opportunity to gain experience by helping with our work. To find out more and how to join us, please visit our website or email us.
The Write Club

Generations and the generation gap...

Write Club (the Creative Writing Society) are excited to announce that they are launching a series of anthologies. This is a natural progression for the Write Club team who have produced a number of excellent newsletters over the last three years. “Following our mini foray into producing a book last year on Social Housing, and with the addition of new committee members, we feel that the time is right to develop our anthology series”. The anthology series will be a mix of fiction and life writing. With both fiction and poetry books lined up for next year.

For us the Social Housing book came about accidentally. We’d talked about producing an anthology for a while but we obviously needed something to shift gears from talking about it to actually doing it.

The first title, The Other Side of the Fence: Real Social Housing tenants will be available to purchase from Amazon this summer. In the meantime the Committee have big plans!

We have all sorts of things lined up. Poetry, prose, a Halloween anthology, but our current project is about Generations and the Generation Gap. We are looking for contributors to give their views on:

- Privilege,
- What they feel that their generation has to offer,
- What they wish older/younger generations understood about their values and aspirations,
- What they wish older/younger generations understood about the challenges they face,
- Anything else they would like to share.

The book will have a series of sections, to cover the whole of the generation gap:
- Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers, Silent Generation, Do We Really Need to Label Everything?

Please feel free to contact us via WriteClub@gmx.co.uk if you would like further information about any of this. We will be happy to talk about how to get involved.
Imagine, it’s November already, sigh…
Halloween and Bonfire Night are behind us, and it’s going be grey for quite a while. And cold. And dark and wet. Isn’t it?
No, it isn’t! It’s not just seasonal drawbacks that are on the horizon, because the OU Poetry Weekend will be happening soon!
The weekend usually happens somewhere picturesque and reasonably easy to get to. It’ll be in the North West of England this year. You’ll find yourself in the admirable company of poets from all backgrounds, degrees of experience, and walks of life - or ‘chiefly yourselves’, as one can happily say of the Open University - and not just the Leeds City Varieties from a few years back. And an established poet will be invited along to be the master or mistress of ceremonies (I can’t think of the appropriate single-sex word here).
And that’s just the highpoint of the year. We also produce several workshop magazines each year (new editors always welcome) - and an anthology of poems out of them, voted the best of the year. Then there’s the AGM in London in spring, to which everyone is invited for a bit of a day out. Things must be working reasonably well, because several of our members have published their own collections recently.

Why poetry at all, you may ask? Poetry goes up and down in the public estimation for sure. Poets were once called ‘the unacknowledged legislators of the world’ - which was probably true at the time - even if it was a poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who said so.
Is the same true today? Perhaps not so much so, but it’s up to today’s poets to get themselves noticed. So, if you’ve got things to say, and new ways of saying them, please come and tell us how. Or if poetry is a pure pleasure, or a means of quiet contemplation, tell us about that too. Poetry is what we make of it. You can check us out on oupoets.org.uk, or look up Open University Poets on Facebook. You don’t have to be called Bysshe, but why not, it feels right.
I hope to meet you in November. And if there’s room to sign off with a haiku…

lanterns of delight
blemishes redeemed by fog
I like November

Mark Bones
Poetry Society Representative
NEW Labour and Co-operative Society is launching!

The first political society within The Open University will soon to be launched! Open to all who are interested in politics and current affairs, and particularly for those who are members and supporters of the Labour and Co-operative Parties, the new society will be the perfect place to network, hear from key politicians and political commentators, and campaign on issues that matter to YOU.

As the society is still being formed, this is an excellent opportunity to get involved from the very beginning, shaping the way the society will operate. Membership of the society is free and is open to all members of the OU Students Association.

To get involved, or to find out more details about the Labour and Co-operative Society, contact Matthew. We look forward to hearing from you!

Note: The OU Students Association is an apolitical organisation with no affiliation with any political party. The Association cannot promote the views of any party political or campaigning society.

New volunteer opportunity for OU students with an interest in research...

One of the aspects of Student Voice is researching how we as the Association can make Student Voice more effective for you as members of the student community.

This is why I am very excited to announce the introduction of a new volunteer role, directly linking into our research. Initially to be run on a trial basis, the new role of Volunteer Researcher invites students to volunteer with us for a short period of time on themed projects. As always, these projects will help support the Association’s key strategic objectives to engage you as students, listen your feedback and represent your collective interests.

Open to current and past OU students, who are full members of the Association, you would be working closely with the Student Voice team and the Association’s Research and Information Officer. Whilst gaining exciting insights into the Association’s research work, you would help us by offering your student view with regards to being a distance learner and OU student, with the opportunity to visit the OU campus in Milton Keynes. Has this made you curious? For further information on the role, as well as details about the time commitment and how to apply please have a look at our opportunities page – we look forward to hearing from you!

Caroline Poppenga
VP Representation & Research

Get involved!

Find out more about the role, and how you can apply, on our website.
Last year there were over 130 student meet-ups held all around the country and this year we hope to add more locations to our list.

Keep a look out to see if there is one taking place near you.

If there isn’t a meet-up taking place in your area, then maybe you’d be interested in hosting one yourself?

We can help you with the planning and organising and we can promote the event on social media for you. A support pack will be sent out and this contains all the info you need to help you host your first meet-up, as well as lots of goodies to hand out on the day.

If you’d like to find out more or if you have any questions please email us at Student-Community@open.ac.uk or visit the Association website oustudents.com/about-meet-ups.
Write for OU Students Magazine...

...and your article could be featured in a future issue of the magazine!

Your story could be here...

Are you an OU student with a story to tell?
Do you want to share your study experiences with other OU students?

OU students are amazing due to the variety and diversity of life experiences and knowledge they have. We love reading these experiences and tips, and sharing them with other OU students.

From life stories to study tips, we want to hear from you to build the OU student community and share this information across it.

So if you have something to say to tips and experience to share, why not give it a go?

Your article could end up here being read by thousands of your fellow students.

Send through your ideas and articles get in touch at oustudents-magazine@open.ac.uk
An OU student... goes to Conference!

One day an OU student arrives at campus to register for Conference.

On Saturday morning, they vote on important Association matters.

For the rest of Friday they take a tour of campus and meet their fellow students.

In the afternoon, they attend many workshops...

...and chill out with other OU students on the lawn.

Before they leave, the OU student says goodbye to their new friends and promises to keep in touch.

On Sunday, they attend more workshops and talks.

Inspired by what they’ve seen at Conference, the OU student can’t wait to get more involved!

Do you have an adventure for our OU student to go on? Is there a subject that you’d like to see them tackle? Let us know at oustudents-magazine@open.ac.uk and maybe your idea will be in the next issue of OU Students Magazine!

It’s almost the end of exams and EMAs...

... so treat yourself to some merch from the OU Students Shop!

www.oustudentsshop.com