



OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
22 – 24 April 2022

HOOT CREATOR VOLUNTEER ROLE

The CEC is asked to:

- i) **Discuss** and approve the proposed introduction of a volunteering opportunity for students wanting to contribute more regularly and officially to The Hoot.
- ii) **Approve** the role description for the proposed volunteer opportunity.

1. Background

1.1 Building the Objective

- a) Following recent increased student engagement with The Hoot due in part to a successful run of using micro-volunteers to trial a Hoot based volunteer role, the Vice President Engagement and Digital Communications staff team have identified the possibility to make this a more permanent and structured role.
- b) It has been noted that an opportunity such as this would provide a gateway to volunteering to students not previously reached under the current types of opportunities.
- c) This is an exciting project which will allow volunteers to grow in a role designed to support their aims, whilst also contributing to all the Association's strategy strands and the Digital Communication team's planned activities.

1.2 Shaping the Role

- a) Aim:
 - To increase student engagement with The Hoot and thus the reach of The Hoot by supporting a group of official Hoot Creators to produce high quality, regular content.

- To increase student-generated content output and maintain a regular posting schedule.
- b) Purpose:
- To create a community that helps students feel connected to each other, the Association, and the OU.
 - To offer a new creative volunteer role for students not interested in other current opportunities.
 - To provide students with an opportunity to improve their digital writing and content creation skills, gaining valuable experience in the workings of a magazine and receiving regular editorial feedback.
- c) Role Involves:
- An initial training period of two months (see section C. *Recruitment and Training*).
 - An initial self-assessment of the volunteer's skills and what they expect to gain from the role.
 - Regular contact from the staff editor of The Hoot to discuss the Hoot's editorial calendar and to develop briefs/pitches for content (articles or quizzes).
 - A commitment to submit *at least* one piece of content per month.
 - An agreement to engage with and promote the Hoot's output on social media where possible. (I.e., if the student uses social media they will like and share posts. If they do not use social media, they can read and comment on other articles).
 - The possibility to take on a more specific role title such as Volunteer Reporter, Volunteer Columnist, or Volunteer Quizmaster.
 - A Hoot profile badge and role title in the volunteer's Hoot bio section.
 - A self-assessment to track the volunteer's progress at the end of their term in the role.
- d) Desired Skills
- A proficient level of writing competency.
 - Collaboration and teamwork.
 - Ability to apply feedback.
- e) Expectations
- Willing to use a Slack channel to communicate with staff and other volunteers.
 - An interest in journalism, writing or content creation in general.
 - An ability to follow Hoot Guidelines and the Association Style Guide in all output.

1.3 Recruitment and Training

a) Recruitment

- To be done via the online volunteering portal on oustudents.com.
- To be advertised in The Hoot, on Association social media, in newsletters, on Student Home Bulletin, and to Association affiliated support groups (OU Pride, BAME Students, Disabled Students Group).

- Recruitment will include the following questions proposed in *Appendix 3: Recruitment Questions* and the successful candidates will be chosen by Vice President Engagement and the appropriate Digital Communications Officer, with final approval from the Head of Digital Communications.
- b) Training
- Provided by the Volunteering team, Vice President Engagement and the appropriate Digital Communications Officer.
 - To include a volunteering induction, GDPR, brand awareness, and journalism skills.
- c) Support
- Regular contact from The Hoot staff editor, or another member of Digital Communications staff, via Slack and email.
- d) Term Length
- Six months including a two-month training period.

Subject to further scoping by the Volunteering team

1.4 Resources and External Engagement

- a) Volunteer Time
- This depends on the time the volunteer can give and how long they take to complete their commitment of providing at least one piece of content per month. As a result, we will be open and very flexible with the time offered by volunteers.
- b) Staff Time
- This will be spread across the weekly workload of Digital Communications team.
- c) Budget
- None required at present.
- d) External Engagement
- Volunteers may wish to interview OU staff and various professionals for comment in feature or news articles.

For supplementary information on part 1, please see Appendix 1: Role Scoping Document and Appendix 2: SWOT Analysis.

1.5 Implementation

- a) Implementation
- Implementation will begin with setting up a Slack channel and training, once the recruitment process is complete.

- The relevant Digital Communications Officer will work with volunteers to create a schedule for their posts to be submitted prior to approval and publishing.

2. Key Areas

Please discuss the following:

- a) Are the role objectives appropriate in '*A. Building the Objective*'?
- b) Does anything need to be added/removed from the role outline '*B. Shaping the Role*'?
- c) Have we missed anything within '*C. Recruitment and Training*'?
- d) What other considerations need to be taken on board within '*D. Resources and External Engagement*'?
- e) What other considerations need to be taken on board within '*E. Implementation*'?

Fanni Zombor

Gabby Willis

Vice President Engagement

Digital Communications Officer

Appendix 1: Role Scoping Document

Role Description

Role Name	Hoot Creator
Type	Community
No. of volunteers needed	4 - 6
Hours per week	Flexible as long as one piece of content is submitted each month
Location	Online
Overview	<i>The Hoot is an online magazine for OU students, run by the Students Association. This volunteer role will give students the opportunity to join the team at The Hoot, providing them with further editorial support and relevant journalism and brand awareness training.</i>
What will I be doing?	<p><i>Hoot Creators will communicate with the staff Editor of The Hoot to pitch and plan at least one article each per month, each.</i></p> <p><i>The role is very flexible – individual creators may like to take a specific role, e.g., Columnist, quizmaster, or reporter; or they may wish to contribute content on a more varied range of subjects.</i></p> <p><i>Volunteers will also complete self-evaluations to track how their digital writing and content creation roles have grown throughout their involvement.</i></p>
Benefits to self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop skills and confidence in creative digital writing, receiving regular feedback from our staff team • Join a vibrant and friendly community of volunteers
Benefits to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase engagement with and awareness of the OU Students Association • Foster a more diverse range of content on The Hoot • Showcase the skills of OU students
Details of training	All volunteers will need an introduction to the Association and our volunteer policy and values. Training for this role will also include GDPR, brand awareness, and journalism skills.
Employability Skills (pick 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Self-management and resilience • Digital and information literacy

Additional info (internal use)

<p>Aims</p>	<p>Which strands of the strategy does this role support? How does this fit with your team’s business plan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This role supports all three roles of the Association strategy. It will increase awareness, improve relevance, increase engagement, improve opportunities, increase influence, and improve impact. <p>This role supports comms strategy aims 1, 2, and 3, supporting the above strategic aims.</p> <p>This role will support the Digital Communications team’s business plan objective 4.3.1: With support from various teams empower a wide range of stakeholders to continue to contribute timely articles to the Hoot on their activities and distribute best practice about framing their message to students (including writing effective articles and approaches to building an interesting narrative) which captivate the OU student audience (these articles can then be signposted on oustudents.com and/or LinkedIn as appropriate)</p>
<p>Measures for success</p>	<p>For Volunteering and Representation team: Number of applications, number of volunteers, number of volunteers new to the Association</p> <p>Your team:</p> <p>Regularly scheduled content - no days where we do not publish anything on The Hoot, giving us a varied and vibrant editorial calendar with diverse contributions.</p> <p>Increase in readership stats across The Hoot.</p> <p>Increased engagement and following on Hoot social media accounts.</p> <p>Increased awareness of students Association and OU events, activities, and successes.</p> <p>A feeling of community and more staff-student interaction for this staff team.</p> <p>Positive self-assessments from Volunteers</p>
<p>Staff/CEC support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gabby Willis, Digital Communications Officer, will lead with CEC support from Fanni Zombor, VP EDI. In the case of Gabby’s absence, Ciara Linehan, Digital Communications Media and Admin Assistant, will be deputy lead with support from the rest of the digital communications team.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gabby Willis is on a temporary contract, so in the eventuality that this is not extended, another member of staff will take over, with permanent staff member Ciara Linehan involved from the start. • We will keep in touch with volunteers through a slack channel, and the use of the dedicated Hoot mailbox for more official messages. • Volunteers will need different amounts of guidance depending on their confidence and existing ability. Gabby Willis will keep on top of this on a day-to-day basis in Slack.
Equality	Students will only use whatever they use normally for study and will receive support with setting up Hoot accounts if they are unfamiliar with the platform.
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post on the Association website • Share on all social media channels • Email the DSG, BAME committee, and OU Pride • Include in Association and Volunteering newsletters
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer introduction – provided by volunteering • GDPR – provided by Association • Brand Awareness – provided by Digi Comms • Journalism/Digital content creation skills – provided by Gabby Willis and Fanni Zombor

Appendix 2: SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- A completely new type of opportunity to the Association which may interest a very different type of volunteer to those we usually attract.

Weaknesses:

- A completely new venture.
- We will have to work hard to make a distinction between normal student submissions and hoot creator contributions.

Opportunities:

- In the future, we could assist students in creating other types of media such as video, audio, podcasts, social media posts.
- In-person on campus training could be a possibility in the future.
- In the future, we could have student volunteers “covering” events for social media or The Hoot

Threats:

- Heavily reliant on volunteers’ self-management skills and free time availability

Appendix 3: Recruitment Questions

1. Do you have any previous writing experience or training? If yes, please provide detailed examples or links. In no, please specify why you are interested in this volunteering role.
2. What types of content are you interested in writing? E.g., News articles, feature articles, interviews, opinion pieces/columns, quizzes, listicles, top 10s.
3. What topics are you interested in writing about, and how can these be made relevant to OU students?
4. Please write 150 words on a topic you are passionate about.