



CEC 12/21/2

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

January 2022

REPORTS FROM OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION GROUPS

C E C is asked to:-

- i) **receive** the reports
- ii) **note** that unless this paper is starred for discussion prior to the meeting, printed copies will not be supplied

Reports submitted by:-

OU PRIDE
Disabled Students Group (DSG)
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group (BAME)

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
January 2022
REPORT FROM OU PRIDE

1. Committee Updates

The OU Pride committee currently stands at 3 members, 2 elected positions and 1 co-opted position.

During the last period we co-opted one member on to the committee after they approached us looking to help.

We held the following committee meetings

18th October – a general ‘how are you doing’ with Patrice

27th October planning for our Halloween event

1st December

11th January – a planning session for the year ahead

2. Group Membership

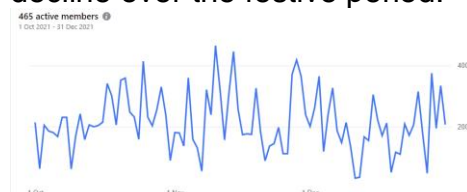
We currently have 841 members registered via OUStudents.com which is an increase of 118 from the last quarter.

We continue to reach out to our membership via the forums and Facebook asking them to join in and asking for ideas on events we can run.

3. Communications

We currently have 730 members on our closed Facebook group, an increase of 95 from the last quarter. We have declined 11 membership requests between 24th September and 5th January due to missing answers to the membership questions, in each case the individual was sent a message advising why and inviting them to try again if they agree with the membership ‘rules’. This included a request from Teesside University’s LGBTQ+ society. In this instance I have reached out to this group looking to find out what they want to achieve with ourselves, and I await their response.

Of these members, 465 were active members between 1st October and 31st December 2021. This number has levelled out from last quarter with an expected decline over the festive period.



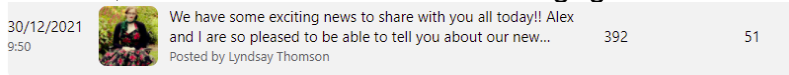
This can be attributed to the regular daily posts on the platform with a mix of news and fun items all with their own #.

We continued this trend over the festive period using Facebook scheduling to ensure that we also got a break.

Our posts continue to have an average reach of between 300 and 400 and an average engagement of between 30 and 60.

Our most popular post this quarter was news of a staffing change within the OU, related to the GCRN. This had a reach of 461 and an engagement of 45. More on the GCRN later.

This was closely followed by a post where we introduced our new committee member, with a reach of 392 and an engagement of 51:



We saw a lull in the forum over this period despite events continuing to be posted here. This is an area of focus for the first quarter of 2022.

4. Events & Activities

Our regular events are:

Drop-In – a chance for members to join us online, meet the committee and have an informal chat:

22nd October - where we had a special guest Zoe Clayton talking about the new Safe Space Reporting tool. This session was recorded and information posted across our platforms. Those who attended also signed up to help the testing of the system.

26th November

We did not have a drop in in December due to the festive holidays.

Monday Morning Rise and Shine

4th October

Once again we had no attendees at this event so it was decided to cancel this event for now.

OU Pride Book Club – a book club where the book is written by a queer author or has strong queer representation within the book:

12th October

14th December

We decided to make this event every 6 – 8 weeks to allow our members time to read the book etc. These two events were well attended with a core group joining both.

Everyone who attended enjoyed the chat and brought some really good insights and points of view.

We have also picked the book for January.

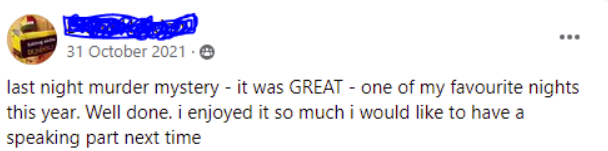
OU Pride Halloween Murder Mystery!

We ran a teams event on Saturday 30th October for Halloween where we invited our members to take part in a murder mystery.

It was a really good night with lots of giggles as we encouraged everyone to get in to their character. We had a prize for the person first to get the murderer correct and were very pleased when someone did name them correctly!

Some members joined but were not comfortable taking part but they were still able to have a giggle and make a deduction.

Everyone who attended encouraged us to use this format again.



OU Pride Jolly Jamboree

We held this Christmas event on Saturday 18th December, on MS Teams. Before hand we asked our members to register and send them a goodie bag consisting of a bauble for them to decorate along with craft supplies for this purpose. We also got a Christmas card made up and sent that with the pack, to allow us to show our appreciation for the effort our members put in. We asked everyone to put on a Christmas jumper and judged the most Christmassy, the most unique and funniest. We had a quiz and games throughout the evening as well. Everyone who attended had a great night.

During this period there were a few major days of note in our calendar.

The first one was World Mental Health Day on the 10th October. We shared support groups and apps and encouraged our members to share the post.



National Coming Out Day was 11th October.

For this we asked our members to share their coming out stories, both good and bad, as an encouragement to those not able to come out yet.

National Hate Crime Awareness Week was 9th – 16th October.

We posted awareness of this week along with resources on how to report a hate crime and helplines for anyone affected by a hate crime:

#NationalHateCrimeAwarenessWeek

This week is also National Hate Crime Awareness Week

This aims to bring people, groups and organisations together to raise awareness of hate crime and encourage everyone to take a stand against it!

Did you know that Stonewalls Hate Crime and Discrimination Report found that 1 in 5 LGBT people in Britain have been verbally or physically abused because of who they are!! This is both shocking and unacceptable!

To find out how you can get involved there is information here:

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/node/101406>

<https://www.stophateuk.org/hate-crime-awareness-week/>

#SpreadLoveNotHate

National Pronouns Day was 20th October

For this date we encouraged our members to add their pronouns to whatever resources they could. We posted a link to resources explaining the different pronouns etc.

Intersex Awareness Day was 26th October

We explained the history and meaning of the Intersex flag, alongside a picture of it:



Black History Month was also October and OU Pride chose to support this month by showcasing someone who was vital to both black history and the LGBTQ+ movement every Wednesday throughout the month.

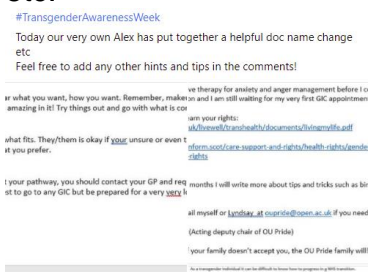
For each person we talked about why they were so important to both groups.

We also encompassed this with our usual #FollowFriday by talking about organisations who are committed to looking after queer black people.

Transgender Awareness Week was 13th – 19th of November.

This week we had a different post each day on a different aspect of transgender awareness: gender pronouns, trans flag history and meaning, a timeline of relevant dates, how to be an ally etc

We have also created a document containing things like how to change your name etc:



This week culminated in Transgender Day of Remembrance on 20th November.

We decided that our pages would go quiet for this event. Before hand we asked that our members use this day to remember any trans siblings we have lost over the previous 12 months and advising that any posts to the page would not be approved until the following day.

We put up the trans flag from midnight on the 20th.



World Aids Day was 1st December.

For this day we turned our page red.



We shared resources on ending the stigma of HIV.

An article also was scheduled to The Hoot which was one of our members sharing their story of their HIV+ diagnosis and living with HIV.



Lyndsay also attended a meeting discussing the APP student submission. Whilst LGBTQ+ is not a characteristic included in this submission it was agreed that our group should have an awareness and an input into this. I look forward to continuing with this work this quarter.

Lyndsay attended a meeting with Linda Aradi to discuss what Linda can do to help OU Pride. This meeting brought up many ideas which will be discussed with the wider OU Pride committee and hopefully create some actions early 2022.

Lyndsay also had a meeting with a member who contacted the student association regarding OUGCRN. We discussed the latest updates from the OU regarding this group and what the next steps for OU Pride could be. This member has requested the creation of a Gender Inclusive group.

We only have 2 events planned for the next quarter:

Book Club – 18th January

OU Pride – A whistle stop tour of Pride History as part of Freshers Fortnight.

We are looking to review last year in full and decide what events will continue or new events that will start, during our first meeting of this new quarter on 11th January.

5. Student issues & challenges

During this quarter we were still dealing with some of the fallout from the OUGCRN. Our members have realised that due to legal actions there have not been any updates from the university, however they have voiced their disappointment with this. Any news stories in this arena always generate chatter and unrest for a period.

6. Any other initiatives or updates

Lyndsay is taking part in the EDI event during Student Conference weekend, as part of an interview exploring equality, diversity and inclusion at the OU.

The committee took a slower pace over the festive period with just general fun posts going up.

Now we have an extra member we are starting to discuss plans for 2022 and have a full planning meeting scheduled for 11th January. One of our members has offered to join the committee, bringing our number back to 4, so we expect this to be completed soon.

Lyndsay Thomson
Chair
For and on behalf of OU PRIDE

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
January 2022
REPORT FROM THE DISABLED STUDENTS GROUP (DSG)

1. Committee Updates

Since the last report, the committee had a resignation of the Chair Megan Brown. We wish her well and thank her for her hard work over the years with the committee. Before the elections, the committee had one officer and five committee members. After the elections held in November and December of 2021, The DSG committee has a full membership, which consists of 3 officers, Chair, Secretary and Events and communications officer, and 8 committee members.

The full list of committee members is as follows:

Chair: Marilyn Salstrom

Secretary: Eileen Newman

Events and communications officer: Rebecca Phoenix

Committee members:

Felicity Burgess

Hannah Boyland

Hannah Burns

Leanne White

Laura Cranstoun

Kate Withers

Susanna Van-Tonder

Sophia Davis

During the pre-election period (between August and December 2021), the committee has held monthly meetings at the start of each month.

2. Group Membership

Current membership numbers: 795 members

The membership has grown considerably which is encouraging. We are promoting our spaces on social media platforms, as well as Freshers events in the main Open University groups and the Students' Association spaces.

Introductory events where people come to meet the committee and ask questions about studying as a disabled student have been well received and popular.

In future, we plan to hold more regular events (monthly drop-in), use Freshers to promote the DSG and so on), find more topics to talk about in The Hoot to engage with and continue raising awareness of the group.

3. Communications

#SharingPositivity posts every week on Facebook and forum spaces have generated significant engagement. Conversations between members and committee on an informal, positive note. The plan is to continue with this.

Once the new website is up and as we have a full time Events and communications officer, we hope to increase the website usage for promoting our space, creating new content and so on.

In November, the DSG sent out a Newsletter to its members. Hopefully once the new committee is established, we can work on making this a recurring project also.

Social Media account followers:

Twitter: 558 followers

Facebook (Group) approximately 2200 members

4. Events & Activities

Pre-elections, the committee held three social drop-ins for DSG members to get together in a space and chat. The last event was a Christmas theme and it had a quiz. They were hosted by two or more committee members and were attended by between 5-10 students at each session. These went very well, and the people who attended were asking for this to be continued. Once the new committee is more established, we can hopefully resume these events.

The DSG was represented during StudentVoice week, with an OU Library session held for disabled students to gather their feedback about participating in research and barriers they may face. This was advertised by the committee and the session was hosted by the Acting Chair Marilyn Salstrom and Caroline Barrat from the library.

* Work on increasing engagement and attendance at events:

Making sure our spaces remain accessible

Being open to queries from students in case of accessibility problems etc

Advertising on as many social media and other online spaces as possible

Asking for member feedback on events, what they would like to do rather than just ideas from the committee

5. Student issues & challenges

The main issues that have been raised are regarding alternative formats for study materials and Disabled Students' Allowance.

There have been fewer problems with alternative formats compared to last year. Our work with the OU through the Students' Association, particularly VP EDI Patrice Belton, has been successful in lowering the number of complaints.

DSA is an issue that requires signposting to external resources, so it is not always easy to solve a query.

We hope to create a more in-depth guide to DSA for all the nations as part of the update to our website.

6. Any other initiatives or updates

Since the Contact Us form on our website has been updated, we are receiving the queries direct to the DSG mailbox which speeds up the responding to questions from either current or potential members.

The feedback from the DSG committee has made a huge difference to the accessibility of the social media content from the Students' Association. This is an extremely positive change.

Marilyn Salstrom
Chair of Disabled Students' Group Committee
For and on behalf of the Disabled Students Group



Central Executive Committee (C E C) Business

January 2021

REPORT FROM Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) GROUP

1. Committee Updates

The Committee are now at 2 committee members (including the Vice President Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (V P E D I) who sits on the committee ex-officio) as 2 Committee members have now stepped down from their roles, due to personal circumstances, wellbeing and workload. Options around co-option were discussed at the last committee meeting (December 2021) and with the Head of E D I and Students welfare and the E D I Project's Officer; this is now being in progress and an up to 5 (new) committee members and 4 (new) positions (including a Group Chair) are due to be filled. This will enable the Group to fall in line with other the E D I Groups in terms of representation.

The last Committee meeting was held on:

- The 6th of December to assess role commitments, student engagement and next steps.
- In October/November the Committee members were also invited via a poll, to arrange a collective introduction meeting with the E D I Project's Officer, but participation for this was low, and so, it was not actioned; however, separate communications via email and Microsoft Teams thread enabled this to take place, alternatively.
- (Lastly) in this meeting the V P E D I encouraged the committee members to put on a winter holiday event for students, to help boost engagement and as a thank you for their contributions over the 2021 year, this was actioned as drop-in 2 sessions (to accommodate separate time zones) on the 18th of December.

2. Group Membership

There were 128 members (last know figure – November 2021) who had registered via the Association website, which saw an increase following 'Freshers 2021' and the (new) Association leaflet, which went out to students in their induction packs; both also had some influence on numbers in the Facebook group and on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Forums. That said, the numbers on the forums are not (presently) monitored, but the **activities there are steadily increasing regarding students interacting or contributing in comparison to Facebook**. At present, the V P E D I remain the most (visibly) active Committee member, in both spaces, so that may have some impact on engagement.

3. Communications and Engagements

- At present the tally on Facebook is 136 (including up to 4 Association Staff).
- To date the membership on Facebook has lost approx.10 members; with only 4 removals (1 Staff due to them leaving the Association and 2 others who were added in error, and 1 student due to disruption and breach of the group rules – in the earlier stages of the group formation), whilst others left on their own accord.
- Facebook membership declined numbers have been a mixture; due to some requesters failing to answer entry questionnaire (90% of these individuals, once assessed to be connected to the OU (e.g. members of other Association groups or clubs), were sent follow up messages via Facebook messenger to advise why they were being invited to answer the questionnaires and offered an opportunity to re-apply or answer these in messenger), whilst

some requesters who were not connected to the OU or the wider Student community. A rough tally for numbers declined stands at approximately 32.

- Other spaces with group activity:
 1. WhatsApp – (firstly) a collective chat/group (student-led) which currently has 13 members from the Facebook group (and at least 5 members communicate daily/weekly) and (secondly) an informal chat/group for Committee Members only (to keep in touch and share reminders).
 2. Facebook Messenger - an informal chat/group for students, initiated and led by a Committee Member; it currently has 22+ members from the Facebook group (*activity levels are unknown*).
- Between 1st August 2021 and 11th January 2021 there were 116 members active.
- Activity in the Facebook space was steady between September and November months due to Freshers and Student Voice Week (SVW), although October (Black History Month (BHM)) saw a significant increase in activity and engagement.

(N.B. These figures will now represent engagement from the initial launch of the group, since April 2020; due to no available/historical reports to refer to.)

1. Quarterly engagement (01/09/2021 – 11/01/2022):

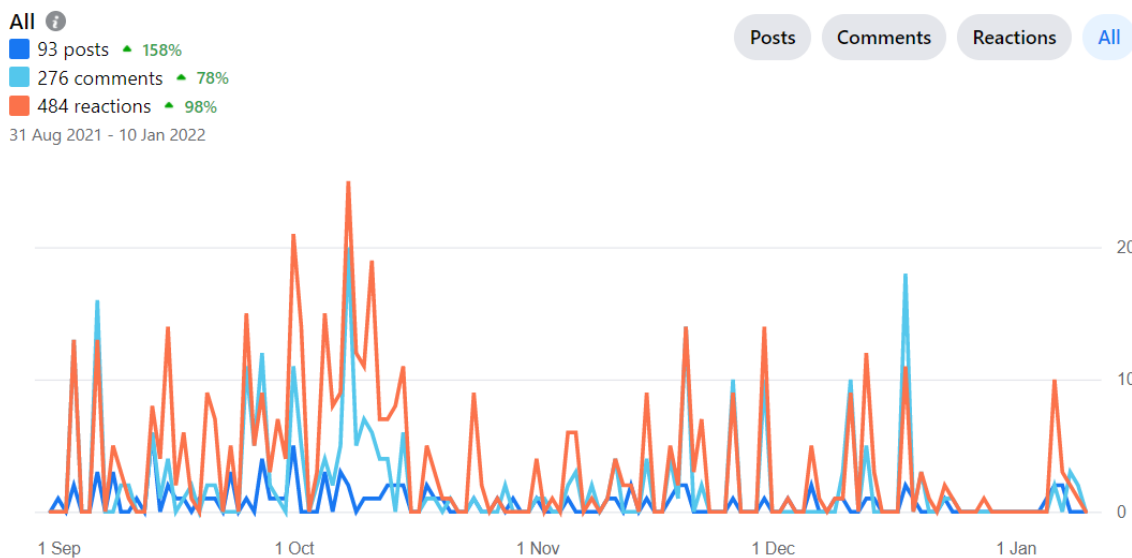


Figure 1: BAME Group Quarterly Engagement (Source: Facebook 11/01/2022)

2. BAME Group engagement for a year (12/01/2021 – 11/01/2022):

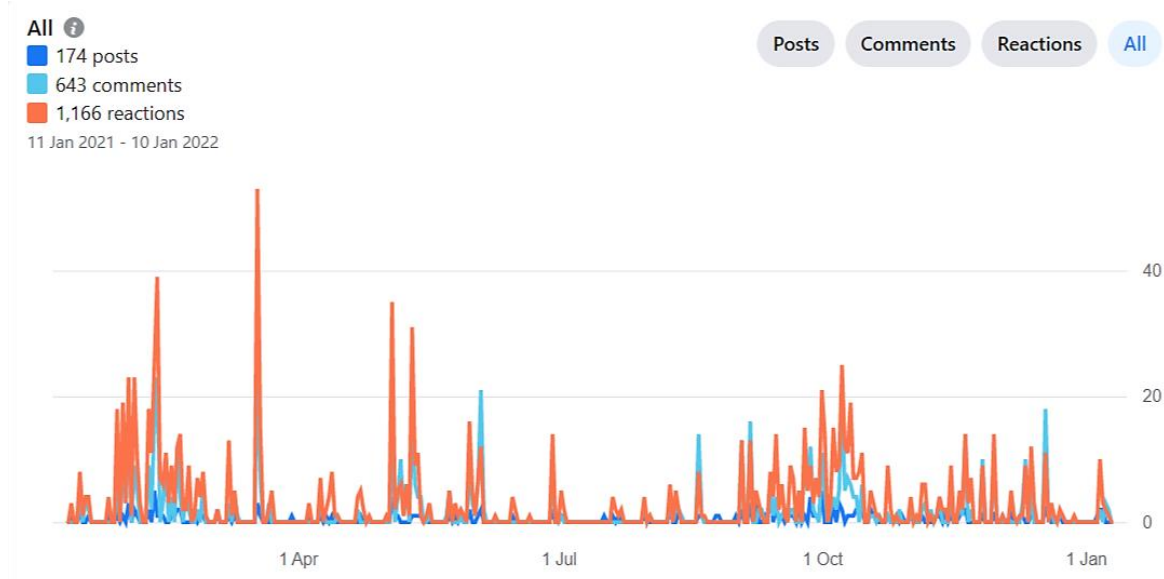


Figure 2: BAME Group Engagement across a year (Source: Facebook 11/01/2022)

(Significant points of interests for engagement based on the above are, 'September Freshers and BHM and SVW'; we also saw activity pick up at Freshers in February 2021 which then fluctuated through to May/June (i.e. the end of Module period) where it spikes, and then drops off again after modules end in July.)

4. Events & Activities

Most of the event's we've had across the year are events at Freshers or targeted events from the Association, much of these were hosted by the V P E D I (on the interim, whilst the group remains without a Chair), including 2 Committee introduction sessions during the September 2021 Freshers, which saw all Committee members in attendance. One Committee Member, who supports in the Facebook space, has presented ideas to students for an 'Open Mic Event' which was welcomed, but plans did not bring this to fruition. This is something still on the cards for a future date (potentially?!). Prior to the start of BHM, the Committee had a brief meeting, with the V P E D I and Student's Support and Welfare Projects Officer, to share ideas and suggestions for participation and to help support students across the month.

Some ideas which manifested from this were:

- A **social media campaign** for (ALL) OU students to 'share their **inspirational figures** for BHM' (this was initiated by one of the BAME Committee Members, who wrote a short piece for the Hoot Students' Magazine to use as a prompt and opener).
- A **social media campaign** to encourage (ALL) OU students to write '**words of empowerment** to their future selves' (this saw a diverse group of students collaborating and sharing conversation, ideas and empowerment in an open student forum, which previously had negative exchanges following the Black Lives Matter protests - so a considerate and positive impact).
- Another activity for BHM was the '**Proud to Be**' celebrating the Association's BAME Volunteers and Students' **campaign**, which members from the BAME Facebook/WhatsApp Group collaborated on. Students were sent interview questions by the V P E D I and their responses were collated into articles and published on the Hoot Students Magazine.

- (On Facebook) the V P E D I (and sometimes Committee / Group Members) often share updates or insights around special Cultural or Religious events / days (the most prevalent mentions have been Eid, Diwali, Easter, and Christmas). That said, working with the Association's Digital Campaigns Officer and (some) members from the Student Leadership Team, the V P E D I (on behalf of the BAME Group) has started supporting an E D I related project for **Inclusion and Awareness building**; to highlight and publicise (more) '*Global Awareness days, Cultural Celebrations and Religious Events/Days*'. This commenced with a Hoot article to celebrate **Diwali** in November 2021 and continued with a Hoot article supporting **Hanukkah**.

In terms of planning and collaboration between Committee members and the Association Staff Team; much of this presently takes place in the Microsoft Teams space, on emails and in the (informal) WhatsApp group (as mentioned above). All meetings are organised around morning times, to accommodate international time-zones as (some) Committee Members (operate) remotely from Asia. In November (the then) Committee Members had offered to support the testing for the Safe Space Reporting System with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor-Students Office (Zoe Clayton) which took place around 22nd of November 2022.

5. Student concerns & study related challenges

Students had been reluctant to share study related concerns in the Facebook group, however the recent increase in activity on the Forums space appears to be encouraging more freedom of exchange, from this cohort. Much of the feedback or concerns picked up have been about community and isolation during study (with several students sharing gratitude for finally having a space to meet others from similar backgrounds). Whilst others have found timings for Tutorials to be disadvantaging and difficult; particularly, due to international time-zone differences which meant Tutorials often took place after midnight, for some students.

6. Any other initiatives or updates

The E D I Projects Officer, the Student Support and Welfare Projects Officer and V P E D I collaborated on a survey to collect feedback from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Students Group membership (i.e., all registered members). The Survey was closed on the 22nd of November, and all students who participated were required to join the Group's membership via the Association's [website](#). The findings still are in deliberation and discussions within the EDI & Student Welfare Team; and the E D I Project's Officer and V P E D I have begun work on helping steer and shape future development and plans for the Group and Committee to bring students feedback and comments to fruition.

Our main aim (however) is to; now review applications for co-option and/or expansion by mid-January, agree the (new) Committee Members and finalise respective roles. We will then follow up with training and induction by the end of January 2022.

Patrice Belton

V P E D I & Committee Member (ex-officio)

For and on behalf of OU Students Association BAME Group