



**CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEC)  
27 November – 7 December 2021**

**MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held via the online forums from 27 November to 7 December 2021 and via Microsoft Teams on 4 December 2021.

**PRESENT**

Patrice Belton, Vice President Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)  
Ian Cheyne – Deputy President  
Nichola Connolly – Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS)  
Gareth Jones - Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Business & Law (FBL)  
Sarah Jones – President (Chair)  
Alison Kingan - Vice President Student Support  
Cinnomen McGuigan – Vice President Education  
Matt Porterfield - Vice President Administration  
Lucy Richardson – Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Open and Access  
Anca Seaton - Vice President Community  
Hanna Silk – Area Association Representative (AAR) for Wales  
Bev Smit – Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)  
Danielle Smith – Student Member of Council  
Kate Wells – Area Association Representative (AAR) for Europe  
Leanne White – Area Association Representative (AAR) for England  
Fanni Zombor - Vice President Engagement

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Rob Avann – Chief Executive  
Georgie Moore – Executive Support Assistant (minutes)  
Beth Metcalf – Director of Membership Services  
Dan Moloney – Director of Engagement

**INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

**A. PRESIDENT’S WELCOME**

The President welcomed the CEC to the December 2021 meeting and gave a special welcome to Stephanie Stubbins who has returned to the CEC as STEM FAR. There were no observers for this meeting due to the short agenda.

**B. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**C. MINUTES**

C.1 Actions from the last CEC have all been completed.

**D. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

D.1 None raised.

**SECTION A: ITEMS FOR APPROVAL AND REPORT**

Due to the CEC meeting being moved forward, the next reports will be Tuesday 22 January 2022

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|-----------|--|--------------------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>DELAYED: REPORTS OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</b>   | <b>CEC 12/21/1</b> |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>DELAYED: REPORTS OF OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION GROUPS</b>  | <b>CEC 12/21/2</b> |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>RECEIVED: REPORT OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES</b>  | <b>CEC 12/21/3</b> |
| 3.1       | The President noted how positive it is to see some active new societies.   |                    |
| 3.2       | VP Community confirmed that the Mountaineering Society had been disaffiliated due to a lack of engagement amongst the Committee, and the Chair not being able to continue in his role due to personal circumstances. They will however be supported in setting up a club and referred to clubs of similar interests. She further confirmed that the Alchemy and Fusion societies have been engaging in discussions to form one joint ‘Sciences Society’. This is proving difficult though as both societies have different |                    |

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interests and agendas, but discussions are still ongoing. This new society could also involve anyone with a biology interest as previously this had failed as a separate society.

**4. RECEIVED: FINANCE REPORT** **CEC 12/21/4**

- 4.1 The President suggested that surplus funds could possibly be allocated to student led projects, offering grants for these to be completed. The CEC collectively supported this proposal, however, the Head of Finance and Resources confirmed that it is too late to assign grants with this year's surplus funds but asked for this to be a future discussion point.
- 4.2 The Student Council Member suggested that we use the surplus funds to send Freshers merchandise to students. The Head of Finance and Resources questioned the sustainability of this idea and confirmed the OU Shop are currently sourcing more eco-friendly options to fit in with the increasing sustainable agenda. She further illustrated that due to the current COVID restrictions, staff would be unable to convene a group to make up the Freshers packs.
- 4.3 VP Engagement put forward the idea of offering study sessions from an external mentoring company, such as those offered through the DSA.
- 4.4 **RESOLUTION:** The CEC collectively agreed they would like to discuss this further at the next CEC meeting.

**SECTION B: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

Taken on the Forum Meeting between 23 November – 7 December 2021

**5. RECEIVED: BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT** **CEC 12/21/5**

- 5.1 The CEC were keen to have the opportunity to observe the BoT meetings and also have Trustees attend and observe the CEC meetings.
- 5.2 In an answer to a question from a CEC member, the Chief Executive confirmed that the BoT had noted that the Student Leadership Team (SLT) was the least popular change with the CEC. The Trustees agreed that Nation Reps and non-voting members could attend meetings upon invitation.

**6. RECEIVED: JANUARY 2022 CONFERENCE UPDATE** **CEC 12/21**

- 6.1 The CEC commented positively on the plan for Conference.
- 6.2 The CEC raised issues surrounding voting before Conference and the timings of the votes. The President confirmed that these would be discussed at the CEC meeting in further detail (**see 12/21/9**).

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**7. RECEIVED: BRAND REFRESH (CONFIDENTIAL) CEC 12/21/7**

7.1 This paper is of a confidential nature and is therefore reserved for the confidential minutes

**8. WEBSITE UPDATE (CONFIDENTIAL) CEC 12/21/8**

8.1 This paper is of a confidential nature and is therefore reserved for the confidential minutes.

**SECTION C: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**  
Taken on 4 December via Microsoft Teams

**9. GOVERNANCE REVIEW: DRAFT CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS AND SUPPORTING REVISIONS TO THE ARTICLES CEC 12/21/9**

9.1 The Chief Executive confirmed that the proposal for the Student Leadership Team had been approved in full by the Board of Trustees, with the addition of nation representatives being allowed to attend Student Leadership Team meetings at their discretion, but as non-voting members, as proposed by CEC members. He outlined that the proposal for the Student Forum had also been approved, with the addition of a faculty representative for Open and Access, as proposed by CEC members. The Trustees were keen for faculty representatives to be elected from within the Student Forum. The Trustees had further approved the proposed Scrutiny Panel and noted feedback from the CEC on the name. The Trustees had confirmed that a maximum flexibility for membership should be implemented as discussed at the previous CEC. The proposed Annual General Meeting (AGM) had also been approved in full without any changes. These proposals would now all go before Conference for approval, alongside other more minor changes.

9.2 The Chief Executive then introduced paper 9 and moved to section 3 to explain the proposed 5 Conference resolutions. He confirmed that when a vote takes place to approve these resolutions, each one will be voted on individually by Conference delegates.

9.3 VP EDI raised a few questions but firstly praised the introduction of inclusive language and noted one missed gendered term. VP EDI questioned what the 'objects and powers' were in the Articles, and the Chief Executive explained how these cannot be changed as they are approved by the Charity Commission and so no changes had been proposed on these but he explained that they were the parameters and boundaries of the Association's powers as a charity and what it could use its resources to achieve.. VP EDI then questioned the term 'connected person' and this was explained as a conflict of interest to a Trustee. VP EDI thanked the Chief Executive for his explanations, which had been helpful.

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- 9.4 It was raised as to whether the new AGM would be online only. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Trustees have approved this as an online only event with a 15 month period between AGMs to allow some flexibility when required. It was queried as to whether the Student Forum would be required to produce reports for the AGM, which the Chief Executive suggested was more a matter for the Bye-laws in terms of operational detail.
- 9.5 The Student Member of Council highlighted that there would not be another CEC meeting before Conference and therefore questioned whether the amended Bye-laws would be approved beforehand. The Chief Executive clarified that there would be a chance to review these online before they go live at Conference as a proposed set, not a final version, as they will be affected by which of the 5 resolutions go through. The Student Member of Council then praised the number of resolutions and noted how this is the right amount of information to be providing. The Student Member of Council then confirmed that voting on each resolution individually was preferred but explained that the voting platform was previously not clear on how to vote for each individual resolution and resulted in an accidental block vote. The Student Member of Council urged the creator to consider how these are presented in future and emphasised the importance of using simplistic language to ensure accessibility for all students, especially in a really clear document for all delegates that took them through all the changes in lay terms. The Chief Executive confirmed this was the plan and thanked the Council Member for helpful feedback. The Council Member then questioned the voting majority and why this was as large as 75%. The Chief Executive explained that this was the current rule under the Articles but confirmed that there was general agreement that this was something to consider changing and that it would be discussed with the Board of Trustees at their Board meeting on Tuesday 7 December. The AAR England spoke in agreement for the 75% majority and expressed her disagreement for a simple majority.
- 9.6 The FAR FBL raised the question of contingency plans if only some of these resolutions are approved, considering a few of them are reliant on each other. The Chief Executive confirmed that this is not possible until the vote takes place and once we have a decision, then the finalised plan can take shape. There were many permutations.
- 9.7 VP Engagement expressed concern over moving Conference/AGM to the summer months with the 15-month period. The Chief Executive explained that the 15 months does have some flexibility and there is potential to extend this to 18 months, however these rules would not come into play until the first official AGM. VP Engagement gave her support to this extension of 18 months.
- 9.8 The STEM FAR suggested that there could be an option for students to submit their thoughts and questions on the resolutions before the vote takes place, so that an FAQ document could be shared before the voting begins. The Chief Executive confirmed that this was already in the works.
- 9.9 The Director of Engagement confirmed the campaign structure for the Governance Reform resolutions, with one official 'for' campaign and one official 'against' campaign. These would be student led with signups from 9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> December, once the Board of Trustees have signed off the resolutions. Each campaign group will be given

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autonomy on how they manage their campaign and will also be communicated with to discuss priority debate areas. Opportunities to engage in discussion will be spread fairly across both campaigns, which will include opportunities to submit 2 articles to The Hoot (set deadlines to be provided), a pre-recorded debate (recorded on 5<sup>th</sup> January) between both campaigns will be published along with the opening of voting and each campaign will be able to provide written answers to questions both in and outside of the debate. All of these communications will be monitored closely and must abide by the new Behaviours and Values policy. The Director of Engagement outlined that a call for questions for the debate will be put out to students out on 9<sup>th</sup> December, with a deadline of 22<sup>nd</sup> December for submissions. These will then be shared with each group prior to Christmas to allow for equal preparation time. Depending on which resolutions are most contested, the debate will be split accordingly, with each group having 3 minutes to pitch their argument per section. The debate will be facilitated by an external host and the recording will be available for students to view when voting goes live.

- 9.10 The Student Member of Council stated that for this debate to be successful, the Association must have a high level of student engagement, and questioned what would happen if a sufficient level of engagement wasn't received. The Director of Engagement confirmed that the engagement levels are beyond their control and staff and CEC alike are doing all they can to promote democracy. So far, the subject appears contentious enough to encourage people to get involved. VP Engagement reiterated that as long as we make everything accessible and do our best to spread information, we have to trust people to make informed decisions at the ballot.
- 9.11 Concerns were raised by VP Community over the timing of the changes happening over Christmas. She feared that students may be less engaged and student reps likewise, may struggle with involvement. The Director of Engagement confirmed that this is an optional involvement campaign and those who do not have the time to engage in full are not required to do so. He outlined that the debate is pre-recorded to allow for as many people to view it as and when they can, increasing the accessibility for students.
- 9.12 Further concerns were raised by the Open and Access FAR surrounding accessibility; questioning whether the debate will be subtitled, whether a transcript would be available and if alternative format printouts would be available for the FAQs. The Director of Engagement confirmed that the debate would be fully transcribed by an external agency. The Digital Comms team were working on accessibility for all communications going out.
- 9.13 Questions around a non-majority vote were highlighted by VP EDI. The Chief Executive confirmed 40% of delegates must vote for the vote to be valid and the threshold for approval was 75% approval.
- 9.13 **ACTIONS:** Feedback from this paper will be shared with the Board of Trustees at their meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

**10. CEC POSITIONS STATEMENTS PROCESS PROPOSAL**

**CEC 12/21/10**

- 10.1 The Director of Engagement introduced the paper, explaining that the Association is looking for a way to get positions statements out in an inclusive and democratic way. The paper asked CEC for delegated authority to publish holding statements, in response to emergency events, before an official position statement is released.
- 10.2 AAR Wales queried whether these statements could be put out in Welsh too in the interest of diversity and inclusivity. The Director of Engagement explained this is not something previously considered but that it can be made possible.
- 10.3 VP Engagement recognised how crucial timing is when responding to events or issues, and subsequently supported giving the Position Statements Working Group more autonomy, allowing them to publish a full Positions statement without prior approval when required. VP Education outlined that delegating this authority will allow the Association to respond faster.
- 10.4 The Deputy President queried if there is a definitive list of issues which would require a positions statement, to which the Director of Engagement responded to outline that in doing this we could limit ourselves and instead, individual judgement on a case by case basis should be used.
- 10.5 VP Student Support reiterated the importance of having VP Education on the Committee for all statements that will be used by students to take to the University. The President illustrated that the group would remain fluid and each statement will be looked at individually on who is best to lead on these.
- 10.6 The Open and Access FAR raised the issue of responsibility being taken away from the CEC, and passing on to the Position Statements Working Group, without prior discussion. The Director of Engagement emphasised that in the majority of cases, a standard holding statement is all that will be released without consulting the CEC, and only on rare occasions when an urgent statement is required, will one be released without prior consultation. He reiterated that this is not a dilution of CEC power but rather trying to come up with a solution that is both dynamic and effective.
- 10.7 Contrary to previous comments from other CEC members, the Student Member of Council was pleased with the proposed approach and thought a 7-day response period was appropriate. Queries as to whether the Association can consult external Subject Matter Experts for a statement were raised, to which the President illustrated that in some instances this will be appropriate, and it will also be written into the policy.
- 10.8 VP Community questioned who triggers the need for a statement and how this is done. The Director of Engagement explained that this is a dynamic response and subsequently, any CEC member can raise any issues which may require a positions statement. CCRs are also able to raise issues to the working group also. The FBL FAR reiterated the reiterated the need for flexibility and fluidity when releasing statements.
- 10.9 **RESOLUTION:** The majority of CEC approved the proposal for the positions statement process.

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10.10 **ACTIONS:** The Positions Statement Working Group to include the ability to involve external SMEs in the Position Statements Working Group.

**11. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SURVEY – CEC 12/21/11  
A CLOSER LOOK AT CULTURE**

11.1 VP Engagement introduced the paper and brought to light the discussions and findings from the focus groups held during Student Voice Week. The biggest finding was the demand for a decision matrix on who is best to contact for different areas of support.

11.2 VP Community raised the issue of CEC being accessible in all student led areas, reiterating the importance of making sure that CEC visibility remains high. She suggested for future surveys, to approach students at Freshers events and provide an incentive for them to be a part of the focus groups. VP Engagement confirmed that discussions with the OU are in place to create official Facebook groups, hence increasing the visibility in new spaces.

11.3 Mitigation of time spent in student spaces throughout the CEC queried by VP EDI to ensure that all CEC members are spread fairly, effectively, and not to dilute the power messages being put out. The potential of a shared official CEC page on social media is being considered, which would allow the CEC to pick up when they can. VP Education supported this concept as using personal social media accounts can affect the work/life balance.

11.4 VP Engagement highlighted the issue of unclear social media guidelines for the CEC and agreed to discuss with Head of DigiComms and run training sessions on best practice in social media.

11.5 **ACTIONS:** VP Engagement to discuss the CEC social media policy with the Head of Digi Comms and organise training on social media best practice.

**12. PROPOSAL FOR HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP CEC 12/21/12**

12.1 This discussion was of a confidential nature and has therefore been reserved for the confidential minutes.

**13. OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CEC 12/21/13  
UPDATE**

13.1 The President provided an update on the OU Students Association's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary plans, confirming the introduction of the 50<sup>th</sup> Steering Group. This is a mixed group of 16 participants who have now agreed on objectives to focus on throughout the year.



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These objectives will be split throughout the group and then a smaller delivery group will be formed to help drive activities forward. Merchandise will also be launched at Conference 2022. A month-by-month plan with activities themed around key events has been put together. January/February should be fully in place by the end of the year, with the longer-term plan for 2022 to be completed early in the new year. Key individuals have already been contacted to assist when it comes to larger scale projects. All CEC members were encouraged to share any stories, groups, videos, photos, and societies that they believe could be useful.

- 13.2 A concern was highlighted by the Open and Access FAR regarding asking students to donate to the OUSET fundraiser, expressing the importance of spaces not revolving around donations. They also queried whether the profits raised from the sales of Association 50<sup>th</sup> merchandise would go towards the fundraising target. The President confirmed that the steering group have been conscious of making the narrative about sharing students' stories, with the fundraising objective coming secondary and that it will be handled sensitively. The OU shop will be separating 50<sup>th</sup> merchandise from regular merchandise to ensure profits are split properly.
- 13.3 VP Student Support raised the idea of giving specifics of where the £50,000 will be used, as an incentive to donate. The President noted that this could be an idea for how we continue fundraising in the future if we do so under the premise of a specific bursary.
- 13.4 VP Community suggested that the Association could hold a TV-style students' day where we livestream all day, allowing students to drop in and watch. The purpose of this would be to showcase where OUSET donations would go with the help of special guests.

## SECTION D: ITEMS TO NOTE

### 17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

#### 17.1 Student Voice Week

VP Engagement initiated discussion on the recently completed Student Voice Week. Although there was difficulty encouraging people to engage online in 2021, she highlighted that there were more students engaged in Student Voice Week this year than last year. Despite this, and even though more events were held, engagement was down overall. On average, there were 8 students per session. VP Engagement linked the low turnout in sessions to problems with registration forms, miscommunications between CEC and staff, and insufficient communications being put out to students. No general consensus on what platform to use for events also caused confusion according to VP EDI. The FBL FAR commented on the fact that there were possibly too many events which diluted the message being given out. This has been taken into consideration for next year. VP EDI suggested spreading out Student Voice Week meetings over the space of the year and collating this into one relevant meeting to encourage engagement. VP Engagement explained this would make it difficult to

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retain people across the year. The President outlined that these are all points to be taken back to the Student Voice Steering group.

**18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

18.1 The next meeting of the Central Executive Committee will take place over the weekend of the 22 – 24 April 2022.

<b>Action Log</b>		
<b>Item in the Minutes</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Action holder</b>
9	Feedback from CEC discussion to be shared with BoT	Rob Avann
10.7	Discuss ability to involve SMEs in position statements with the Position Statements Working Group	Sarah Jones
11.5	Social media policy to be discussed with DigiComms and training organised	Fanni Zombor
12.7	The President to start a thread in the teams space for potential HLM candidates	Sarah Jones
17.4	The President to chase and located the updated policy documents.	Sarah Jones