



OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Student Leadership Team (SLT)

9 – 11 February 2024

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION UPDATE

The SLT is asked to:-

- i) **Receive** an update on the Association's EDI work.
- ii) **Receive** an update from the Support Groups.

1. Introduction

1.1 The EDI and Student Welfare Team would like to update the Student Leadership Team on work towards our EDI objectives and provide an update from our current support Groups.

2. Updates from the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) Steering Group

2.1 We are happy to report that we have made some great progress in some of our renewed priority areas, though frustratingly there are some others that have progressed slower than we hoped.

- 2.2 We launched the first EDI Newsletter, sending this out to Group Members and followed with publishing on our website. Of the emails to the Groups, the opening rates are:
- DSG - 57% open rate, sent to 900 members
 - OU Pride – 52% open rate, sent to 612 members
 - Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group – 52% open rate, sent to 181 members
- 2.3 We created and uploaded Accessibility Considerations Training to the Volunteer Zone for roll out to all our volunteers.
- 2.4 Our Team put a bid to the Board of Trustees to have Accessibility Training rolled out to all staff and this was successful. We are looking at booking in three separate sessions: 'Creating PDF and Word Documents', 'Accessible Social Media' and 'Embedding Accessibility and Every Stage of your Project'. Once we have dates the current SLT will be invited to them and then we will also have another session run for the new SLT in Autumn.
- 2.5 Gareth, Jack and myself have reached out to a number of Conference organisers with the hope of presenting our work to a wider audience but we have been unsuccessful in securing a spot so far. However, we are still waiting to hear back from a few more so watch this space!
- 2.6 As reported last time, we have a Trans Inclusion Statement that has been approved by the Board of Trustees but they also asked us to work on a Freedom of Speech Code of Practice to release alongside. We have done this and have shared with our legal advisers who have this week replied with some suggested changes.
- We have been waiting for this before re-engaging with the Trans students in OU Pride because we didn't want to ask them for other ways to support without having done the first exercise they asked us to do (the Trans Inclusion Statement).
- 2.7 In terms of our action plan for supporting Neurodivergent Students, we are looking to plan two small focus groups during the week of the 26th February with a wider survey to be shared thereafter. We have also been in touch with the OU to better understand what support they already offer to students. We discovered that there is a 'Dyslexia Marking Guide' shared with Tutors to use when marking ALL Dyslexic students TMA's, however, this is not in place for EMA's. We asked about the opportunity to introduce assessment choices for students, but we have been told that this is 'on people's radars' but not a priority as it would take an awful lot of work to roll out across all assessments. It was suggested though that The Students Association might be best placed to sway this work as we hold the

relevant and significant 'weight'. This is something we can explore further once the work really starts.

3. Completed or Planned EDI Work

- 3.1 The Individual Representation Service continues to support more students and increase it's awareness. The Board of Trustees have pledged to fund the service long time and so the Team can look at long term goals. One such goal is to look at how we can support more students facing the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) – figures show that out of the 70odd cases heard at CDC last year only 5 were supported by our Student Advisors with only a further 3 representing themselves. This means that a huge number of cases were being heard without any student representation, something that the Team are keen to turn around.
- 3.2 We hit a huge milestone for the Library Study Volunteer Service and before Christmas hit our 500th request! We had a bit of funfair on socials and [an article on the Hoot](#).
- 3.3 The fourth edition of our Hoot for SiSE Magazine has been sent out to Secure Environments along with a short survey to Education Officers to check whether they are receiving it and passing it on. Responses are still being collected.
- 3.4 Our first EDI Roadshow event went really well and had good attendance however no students took part on our call to action following the session. We are looking at planning our next session and tying it into an awareness day.
- 3.5 An awful lot of our time has been taken up with DSG Elections and Appointments. At the April SLT we brought the Groups Review paper where we suggested that we should no longer hold Elections for Group Committees as take up was low, However, the SLT requested that we still elect the Group Chairs but appoint the remaining Committee members. We didn't realise at the time that it would mean running an Election and then an appointment process consecutively so the process of getting a new Committee has taken four months. We will be revieing this process and coming with more information and suggestions for the future in April's SLT meeting.
- 3.6 We have been working on populating spaces on the Aluminare platform for a soft launch to the Groups. This was originally planned for January but there have been delays with Single Sign On which have meant we have had to push the timeline back.
- 3.7 We have been able to restart the Accessibility Standards Working Group meetings and will be working on an Accessibility action plan in the coming months.
- 3.8 We have brought a proposal to the SLT to introduce a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Officer to their Team.

Verity Robinson

Head of EDI and Student Welfare

4. Groups Update

Below are the updates from the Groups.

REPORT FROM DISABLED STUDENTS GROUP

As the Committee are still being inducted this is a short summary written by the EDI and Student Welfare Team and not the Committee.

Committee Updates

After a long period of recruitment there is finally a full Committee. Unfortunately the Chair that was elected in October resigned in December so in the appointments process we asked the panel to consider whether any of the applicants would be appropriate for Chair and luckily there was.

The new recruits have all been really engaging and are all very enthusiastic! You can [read their profiles on their webpage](#).

Group Membership

There are currently 956 members in the Group.

REPORT FROM OU PRIDE

1. Committee Updates

The OU Pride committee consists of 3 members, Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary with our Comms Officer recently standing down.

We have also had the following committee meetings:

Thursday 12th October – committee meeting

Tuesday 28th November – committee meeting

Tuesday 19th December – Christmas event planning meeting

2. Group Membership

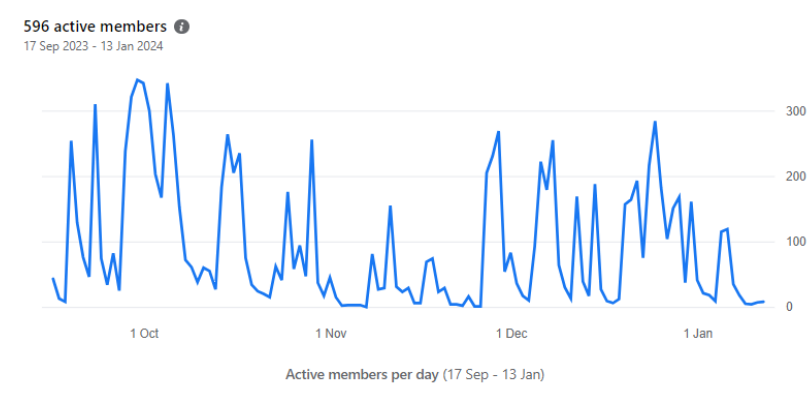
We currently have 661 members registered via OUStudents.com. This number is an increase of 19 since September.

We continue to engage with our membership via the forums and social media asking them to join in and asking for ideas on events we can run.

3. Communications

We currently have 886 members on our closed Facebook group, this is an increase of 13 on last quarter.

Of these members, 596 were active members between 17th September 2023 and 13th January 2024.



The most popular posts relate to the event we ran for the festive season 'Ho Ho No?'



New Year is always difficult for some groups so we were mindful of this and posted a few times to make sure people knew they were not alone

There will be a lot of posts soon with people sharing how much they achieve in 2023. But, in case someone needs to hear this... It's okay if the only thing you did this year was get through it.



4. Events & Activities

We didn't have a Come & Chat event in September due to the date clashing with another event. However, we did run this event:

Friday 27th October
Friday 24th November

Due the festive period this event took a hiatus for December but will be back at the end of January.

On Friday 28th September we hosted a Freshers event. For this Lyndsay and Patrizia ran a quiz (with prizes) followed by a Q&A session. The event was very well attended by non-existing members. The Q&A at the end was very lively and everyone was joining in and the feedback was very positive.

Christmas Event – Ho Ho No! - On the 22nd December, Lyndsay, Steve and Alex Nikkison hosted a Christmas event for students. The event included a Christmas themed costume competition, a quiz including a 'guess that Christmas Tune' round and a scavenger hunt, asking students to find household items with rhyming riddles. Festive goodie bags were issued for those who registered ahead. The event was really enjoyable, with great feedback from all those who attended, in particular on the Christmas goodie bags.

Festive Check-ins - For some people, including those within the LGBTQIA+ community who may not have found acceptance within their families and those who struggle with food or alcohol, the festive period of Christmas and New Year can be really difficult. To make sure our students knew they weren't alone, Steve, who is a trained Mental Health First Aider, was on duty throughout the Christmas period, posting through Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Twixmas and New Years Eve. The posts generated a lot of engagement among students, starting conversations and signposting to useful mental health resources where appropriate.

During this period there were many major days of note in our calendar

Saturday 16th September to Friday 22nd September was Bisexual Awareness Week. For this week we shared a bit of history of the week, celebrity tips for coming out as Bi and an article on Biphobia and Bi-erasure.

Saturday 23rd September was Bi Visibility Day. On this day we ran an oldie but a goodie and asked everyone to share their favourite Bi celebrities.

Sunday 8th October was International Lesbian Day

On this day we encouraged our members to share their favourite lesbians and tell us a bit about them.

Wednesday 11th October was National Coming Out Day

For this we offered encouragement for everyone, whether ready to come out or not.

Friday 20th October was National Pronouns Day

On this day we chose to try and help educate and encourage people on using peoples correct pronouns.

Sunday 22nd October to Saturday 28th October was Asexual Awareness Week

This week we aimed to affirm the existence, validity and diversity of asexual people through awareness and education.

Thursday 26th October was Intersex Awareness Day

For this day we shared what it means to be Intersex and the meaning behind the flag.

November is Transgender Awareness Month

We started the month with an open letter from a member on why we still need trans awareness month.

We shared videos, via Mermaids, from people who lived and worked under Section 28 (as the anniversary of the repeal of Section 28 in England and Wales also falls in November).

We remembered Brianna Ghey, on what should have been her 17th birthday.

Monday 20th November was Transgender Day of Remembrance

For this day we shared some scary and shameful stats on how many trans and gender diverse people were murdered between October 2022 and September 2023.

Then we named every one of them.

Friday 1st December was World Aids Day

This year's topic was "let communities lead". Steve posted key things to do to challenge the stigma that still exists around HIV and Aids.

5. Student issues & challenges

Carly attended a meeting with the OU to discuss the situation between themselves and our trans students.

The meeting went very well and it was felt that there was definitely willingness on both sides to do what can be done to make things better for the student body.

Actions were taken away on both sides and a further meeting is being scheduled for January 2024.

6. Any other initiatives or updates

We have an event booked for Freshers fortnight and are looking forward to meeting some new members and hopefully gaining some more.

Lyndsay Thomson

Chair

For and on behalf of OU PRIDE