

Student Leadership Team (SLT) Meeting Minutes

Date: Saturday 26 April 2025, online via MS Teams.

Attendees:

Name	SLT role	Initials
Natalie Baker (Chair)	President	NB
Andrew Kolapo	Student Member of Council	AK
Andrew Wilson	Deputy President	AW
Charon Gates	WELS Faculty Representative	CG
Isabelle Hoyet	International Representative	IH
Jack Flaherty	FASS Faculty Representative	JF
Katie Hickmott	VP Student Voice	KH
Michael Jones	Wales Representative	MJ
Nichola Connolly	VP Student Representation	NC
Reece Mckeown	Ireland Representative	RM
Name	Staff role	Initials
Beth Pacey	CEO	BP
Gabby Cull	Head of People	GC
Gareth Jones	Head of Student Voice	GJ
Heather Bloomer	Deputy Director of Marketing and Communications	HB
Jazz Simpson	SLT Liaison Officer	JS
Kate Dungate	Student Policy and Insights Officer	KD
Sammi Wright	Representation Officer	SW

Apologies:

Name	Role	Initials
Julie Catterall	England representative	JC
Jethro Tieman	Sustainability rep	JT
Ross Thorne	VP Equality Diversity and Inclusion	RT

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Introduction.
2. Branding update – Heather Bloomer
3. AMS Debrief – Kate Dungate
4. Priority Areas – Update and Workshop.
5. Student Issues Reporting Tool – Discussion.

1.	Welcome and Introduction	
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1.1	NB opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. They thanked attendees that attended Bingo last night. Referenced actions will be given as verbal updates.	
2.	Branding update (HB)	
2.1	<p>Verbal updates on actions from last meeting:</p> <p>A. Reviewing presence on Facebook groups, e.g. staff moderation: A comprehensive review of student community groups will be conducted following the rebrand. The team has identified inactive or outdated Facebook groups. These will be reviewed for potential consolidation. Due to the large number of groups, assigning staff as admins is not feasible. However, student admins will be supported and informed on how to escalate issues effectively. There will be strategic consideration on how to position OUConnect as the primary platform for student communities.</p> <p>B. X (Formally Twitter): Use of X ceased on 1st March with no noticeable impact. It had not been delivering meaningful engagement. Recommendation (HB): Continue to mothball X and focus resources on more effective platforms. JF suggested notifying followers of the inactivity and signposting to active platforms. CG proposed exploring Facebook accounts for Faculty and Area Reps, similar to previous X use. HB noted administrative challenges with role-specific accounts but is open to future discussion. AK inquired about platform performance. HB confirmed Facebook has the highest engagement, with LinkedIn in the top three. MarComms will explore diversifying channel strategies.</p>	
2.2	<p>Rebrand update (presentation)</p> <p>Launch Date: Scheduled for Wednesday 21 May – currently on track. A detailed rollout plan will be shared with SLT via Teams. MarComms is collaborating with OU colleagues to ensure a smooth transition. Website navigation is being simplified in preparation for the new branding. HB presented the new brand, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, mission, values, and logo • Branding guidelines (e.g. logo size, font – Roboto, colour palette, icons) • Examples of templates for social media and website assets <p>IH & JF raised concerns about the removal of the “Submit Your Issues” button. NB confirmed it will return to the homepage post-rebrand. The President thanked HB, noting this is an exciting time for the organisation.</p>	
3.	Annual Membership Survey (AMS) Debrief (KD)	
3.1	KD highlighted alignment between survey results and SLT priorities, especially the Community Priority Project. KD encouraged attendees to reach out for more detailed insights.	

	<p>2,700 students participated in the survey. The team plans to explore ways to boost engagement, including trialing new providers and reducing participation barriers. KD presented key findings, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year-on-year comparisons • Student focus on sustainability and community building • Increased emphasis on allyship and support groups <p>Plans are underway for a “You Said, We Did” article to showcase actions taken in response to the survey, particularly around sustainability.</p>	
4.	SLT Priority Areas	
4.1	<p>Menopause & Perimenopause update GC presented branding work for the webpage, including: colour scheme, banner, and social media assets attendees voted on their preferred options. An overview of support resources was shared, covering internal OU content, external resources, courses, articles, and wellbeing tips. CG confirmed DSG approval for a menopause and perimenopause awareness thread in their space. The project team commended Jasmine’s excellent contributions to the work.</p>	
4.2	<p>ND Student Experience CG and NB are working with DSG on monthly drop-in sessions for ND students. The barrier to this is lack of admin support for DSG, but this should be resolved once the new Disabled Students Representative is in post.</p>	
4.3	<p>Wellbeing weeks Launch planned for May, aligning with Mental Health Awareness Week. Events include a session with Nick Elston and #WearItGreenDay. OU-related content will be shared where relevant. NB encouraged SLT to engage with social media content and video call-outs. More theme ideas needed – suggestions so far include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging • Getting out in nature • Possible live events (e.g., cook-alongs) <p>Awareness days discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menopause Awareness • Neurodiversity (ND) Awareness • Armed Forces Day (linked to the Disabled Armed Forces Veterans Scholarship) 	
4.4	Action: Look at awareness days and awareness weeks, structure our plans and work out themes.	NB JS
4.5	<p>Academic experience JF is collaborating with AK and NC on academic experience improvements. JF is also working with FASS colleagues, including Matt Staples, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage tutors to use cameras during tutorials for better student engagement. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the launch of FASS Tutor Awards. <p>MJ shared their involvement in body doubling sessions, relevant to both academic and community initiatives.</p> <p>NB mentioned a student-only Adobe room on their course, suggesting the potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for more virtual social spaces • Enable student-led body doubling sessions by subject area. 	
4.6	<p>Protecting the Curriculum (PtC) Workshop led by JS and SW</p> <p>Key elements of the PtC project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing and enhancing the process when curriculum is withdrawn. 2. Engaging with the OU. 3. Establishing with students whether this is delivered. <p>Not within scope:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Challenge previous curriculum decisions. 2. Curriculum expansion <p>Current stage: Stakeholder engagement; process review; and mapping future project elements.</p> <p>Aiming for a position statement in July 2025 ahead of Rep training.</p> <p>One possibility is to use standardised consultation questions to support consistency and the VP Student Voice. Define a 'gold standard' process for curriculum changes.</p> <p>NB – consultations should have a named person.</p> <p>Possible decisions tree on this – Have you spoken to students? have you considered deferrals/study breaks etc?</p> <p>Clearly communicate final study dates with sufficient notice.</p> <p>Set realistic expectations without overpromising.</p> <p>NB – Important to check what a Student Rep would ask if they saw a qualification withdrawal</p>	
4.7	<p>Action – Team to investigate a survey of Student Representatives, checking how confident they feel about commenting on withdrawal forms, and what questions they might ask.</p>	SW
5.	Student Issues Reporting Tool – Discussion	
5.1	<p>Students with Additional Needs (+14, 16 voters)</p> <p>Relates to tutors not reading the profiles of students with additional needs. Noted that this is part of Associate Lectures' role description so it should be being done.</p> <p>CG suggests we push to get the 'Understanding Me as a Learner' resource out there as soon as possible.</p> <p>MJ suggests there could be a personal tutor to support the student throughout their studies, liaise with tutors on their behalf etc. AK and NB noted this has been piloted in the past.</p> <p>NB highlighted that the disabled students' profiles need updating and are not currently fit for purpose. This is something they are liaising with the Accessibility Director with on.</p>	
5.2	<p>Action – JS to investigate accessible presentation templates for future meetings</p>	JS
5.3	<p>Hurdle for Student Loan Applications (+10, 12 voters)</p> <p>This issue was submitted over 2 years ago.</p>	

	It is unclear if this issue is still relevant, and which finance system in the four nations is being referred to. SLT members noted that in their personal experience this has been optional, not mandatory. SLT acknowledged that there is a lack of clarity in understanding: perhaps there is work to do here in the messaging students, for example adding this to Student Finance help pages.	
5.4	Action – Get back to the students that submitted these issues, providing an update.	JS
5.5	Moving forward – improving the Student Issues Tool Consideration of adding an expiry date to issues to ensure relevance and currency. Proposal to group issues by subject for better organisation. Suggestion to signpost issues to relevant SLT Priority Projects or OUSA staff who can provide support.	

The meeting concluded at 2.40pm.

The next meeting will be held **in person in Milton Keynes, 18 – 20 July 2025.**

ACTIONS:		Action holder:
4.4	Look at awareness days and awareness weeks, structure our plans and work out themes.	NB & JS
4.7	Team to investigate a survey of Student Representatives, checking how confident they feel about commenting on withdrawal forms, and what questions they might ask.	SW
5.2	JS to investigate accessible presentation templates for future meetings.	JS
5.4	Get back to the students that submitted these issues, providing an update.	JS