



## OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

### Student Leadership Team (SLT)

14 – 16 July 2023

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update & OU Students Association Groups

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 The EDIA Steering Group last met over the April SLT weekend.

2.2 Unfortunately, only one student member of the Group was able to attend but the Team discussed the EDI Roadshows, discussed thoughts around an EDI Newsletter and shared ideas for upcoming awareness weeks.

- 2.3 There is time set aside in the SLT meeting for this Group's discussions, but it was agreed that this time could be taken for discussion of the Peer Support Review paper and the Groups Review paper.
- 2.4 The Team are planning to challenge the OU when it comes to marking practices for students with a neurodiverse conditions.
- 2.4 The Accessibility Standards Group met in May and discussed top issues and quick wins. The biggest issue is where we can store students/volunteers accessibility information that's compliant with GDPR and can be shared when necessary. There might be some website constraints we might have to work around, and we are seeking advice from the OU as to how they store this information. The Group will also look to put together some 'good practice' guidance documents that can be shared.

### **3. Completed or Planned EDI Work**

- 3.1 The theme for Mental Health Awareness Week was 'anxiety' and as well as sharing the support services we also ran an Instagram takeover, held a Mind Apples session and created a [Hoot article](#) on eco-anxiety.
- 3.2 We had plans for Deaf Awareness Week, but unfortunately we had it scheduled for June and it took place in May, as a result we were only able to share the OpenLearn BSL Basics course we'd created in 2019.
- 3.3 We ran a small campaign for Loneliness Awareness Week on social media, highlighting the support services.
- 3.4 Following the April SLT meeting some of the Groups Review Recommendations were agreed and the Team was able to implement them straight away into the OU Pride and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Group Committee elections. These elections were met with varying degrees of success but not all the roles were filled for each of these Groups. We have also had to run co-options for all three Groups since then and it's taking a lot of staff time to organise and facilitate. We are still not sure whether we have the balance right here and whether maybe these roles are too big.
- 3.5 The third edition of the Hoot for SiSE students has been completed and distributed to the Institutions. As well as featuring an article from a student in prison, 9 of the 12 articles were bespoke for the audience.
- 3.6 We have joined up with staff from Academic Services to help hand over students who are going through complaints and lost faith with their Student Support Team (SST). We were finding that some students who has received help from our

student advisors would come back to ask for help instead of then approaching their SST

- 3.7 Our Student Advisors have been working hard to increase awareness with OU Staff, presenting to staff in all the Student Recruitment and Support Centre's.
- 3.8 Work has begun to organise an 'EDI Roadshow', the new look for our EDI Conference. We decided, based on feedback and evaluation from past EDI Conferences, to split sessions over a yearly schedule of events as opposed to an intense two days. We are hoping this will suit more students and that engagement and attendance will increase.
- 3.9 After discussion with the SLT and Groups we are going to be creating an EDI Newsletter with updates from the Groups and the Association, relevant to students. This is designed to help promote intersectionality's and each Group's objectives without the need for each of them to have their own newsletters. They will be shared with all Group members, but hopefully non-Group members can also sign up to hear about the good work.

#### **4. Groups Update**

Below are the updates from the Groups.

## **Report from OU Pride**

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### **Committee Updates**

The OU Pride committee underwent an election at the end of March and has a new committee of 3 members, Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary.

We are just gone through the co-option process for Comms officer and hope to get someone on board as soon as possible for this position.

As part of the on-boarding process we had 2 sessions with the Student Association to talk about how we were going to shape our strategy for our term.

We have also had the following committee meetings:

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April – planning on events and social media

### **Group Membership**

We currently have 610 members registered via OUStudents.com.

The membership was reviewed before the election process to ensure all members are current students and remain registered with oustudents.com

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.

### **Communications**

We currently have 842 members on our closed Facebook group, this is an increase of 16 on last quarter.

Of these members, 367 were active members between 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 and 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023.



This period spanned peak exam and EMA time so was quieter than the previous quarter however there was still a number of active users and posts.

June is PRIDE month so Reach is highest on PRIDE related posts during this time

- 01/06/2023 16:36  Happy #Pride Everyone! (Borrowed this image from the TransRadio account - @LGBwiththeT on Twitter) Posted by Steve Cummins 158
- 01/06/2023 19:58  Happy Pride month to all group members! Posted by Mark Hankinson 165

The other posts of note in this quarter were posts advertising the co-option opportunity and a few news worthy posts:



## **Events & Activities**

We had a 'final' Come & Chat at the end of March where we talked about what we had achieved over the last few years and thanked a committee member, who had decided not to stand again, for all his hard work.

We had another Come & Chat at the end of May where the new committee was introduced properly.

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

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May was International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

On this day we shared a little bit of the history of this day, along with the theme of this year which was 'Together always: United in diversity.

We encouraged our members to remember that we are so much stronger together.

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May was Agender Pride Day

To mark this we shared the Agender flag along with the most fabulous Agender icons everyone should be aware of and celebrate!.

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May was Pansexual Visibility Day.

For this day we shared the Pax flag and '5 things you should know from the LGBT Foundation.

June is of course PRIDE month!!

We have been sharing some images to remind everyone of both sides of PRIDE.

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June is the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots

This event bore the start of the gay liberation movement. PRIDE started as a protest and we take this anniversary as a reminder of this.

We have been putting up any dates of Pride marches and encouraging members to go along to any we know the OU are attending.

## **Student issues & challenges**

A comment was made within the OU Pride forums regarding a complaint made against a tutor by a student and the way this complaint was handled. This was discussed by the committee as it was deemed very serious and related to a letter that was sent to the Open University leadership team regarding the creation of the Gender Critical Research

Network a number of years ago.

After much discussion a further letter was written by OU Pride and sent to the OU and the OU Students Association. This was shared to our membership in order to be fully transparent.

This led to some very difficult times within the forums with personal attacks being made against a member of the committee.

The OU Students Association stepped in to assist with forum moderation and at one point the forum was closed over a holiday weekend to allow the committee to regroup.

There were repeat offenders who were spoken to by the OU Students Association.

Lessons have been learned and conversations are now taking place within different areas of the membership and the committee are pleased to report that these events have helped grow relationships within our community.

### **Any other initiatives or updates**

We have been talking to the DSG group about doing a joint event to celebrate PRIDE. We were unable to work out a time to do this during Pride month but both teams would still love to do a joint event and we are working to make this happen.

**Lyndsay Thomson**

**Chair**

**For and on behalf of OU PRIDE**

### **Update from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group**

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I would like to update you concerning the progress made within our BAME Committee since our respective appointments back in April 2023.

Given how there was a dearth of critical members occupying a few key positions within the committee, the EDI team had previously suggested the three of us, the now former-Chair, the Vice-Chair & the Secretary, to re-run the co-option (which we gladly agreed to) as well as collectively undertake & uphold the responsibilities of both the Events Officer and the Communications Officer (by committing ourselves to its respective training sessions) in the event of a no-show for either of the above-mentioned designations from within the BAME student populace. Thankfully, due to this co-option's rerun, one member has been successfully recruited to join our team.

However, regrettably, during the occurrence of these chain of events, our BAME Chair, Narindra Jha resigned, just earlier last week. I would, on behalf of this group, like to thank Nin for the efforts she has put forth, thus far. In the meantime since then, me and

Larresha, have together managed to establish connections with the OU's internal student services such as the OU's Careers and Employability Services, etc. and convinced them to help promote BAME-based opportunities at least once within their monthly published articles.

At this current point in time, we are attempting to re-organise and make the best use of our existing resources in order to effectively collaborate towards the betterment of this BAME Committee. For instance, from the next month onwards, we have scheduled our very first online event wherein we will put all of our previously attained EDI training sessions' knowledge to practice.

We, as the BAME Committee's team members, mutually look forward to welcoming many more of such collaborative events, both within the OU's Student Services as well as externally.

Best Wishes,  
Gaurang Ghare, BAME Committee Vice-Chair

### **Disabled Students Group**

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There is no update from the DSG on this occasion.

**Verity Robinson**  
**Head of EDI and Student Welfare**