Student Leadership Team (SLT) Meeting Minutes

Date: Saturday 19 July 2025, in-person in Milton Keynes.

Attendees:

Name	SLT role	Initials
Natalie Baker (Chair)	President	NB
Aimee Prior	Disabled Students Representative	AP
Andrew Kolapo	Student Member of Council	AK
Andrew Wilson	Deputy President	AW
Ashley MacKie (online)	Scotland Representative	AM
Charon Gates	WELS Faculty Representative	CG
Isabelle Hoyet (online)	International Representative	IH
Jack Flaherty	FASS Faculty Representative	JF
Jessica Hannington	VP Student Welfare	JH
Julie Catterall	England representative	JC
Katie Hickmott	VP Student Voice	KH
Kimberley Kennedy	VP Administration	KK
Lauren Atkin-Hill (online)	LGBTQ+ Students Representative	LAH
Loz Harris	FBL Faculty Representative	LH
Michael Jones	Wales Representative	MJ
Nichola Connolly	VP Student Representation	NC
Rochelle Benjamin	BAME Students Representative	RB
Ross Thorne	VP Equality Diversity and Inclusion	RT
Vik Afanasjevaite	Open & Access Faculty Rep	VA

Name	Staff role	Initials
Amy Undrell	Head of Programmes	AU
Beth Pacey	CEO	BP
Ciara Linehan	Project Officer	CL
Dan Moloney	Director of Strategy & Democracy	
Gareth Jones	Head of Student Voice	GJ
Heather Bloomer	Deputy Director of Marketing and Communications	HB
Jasmine Ewart	Content Officer	JE
Jazz Simpson	SLT Liaison Officer	JS
Rachel Ishmael	EDI & Belonging Officer	RI
Verity Robinson	Head of EDI & Belonging	VR

Observers:

Name	Role
Barry McNeil	Semco

Clare Charlton	Disabled Students Group (DSG)
Kelly Coker	Student Trustee

Apologies:

Name	Role	Initials
Jethro Tieman	Sustainability rep	JT
Reece Mckeown	Ireland Representative	RM

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Introduction.
2. Priority Projects Updates and Strategic Forward Planning – Dan Moloney
3. Comms Session with the MarComms team – Heather Bloomer
4. Student Issues Reporting Tool – Discussion.
5. Any Other Business

1.	**Welcome and Introduction**	
1.1	NB opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, including observers, and new SLT members. Reviewed actions and matters arising from the last meeting that took place in April. Provided an overview of what the morning's session will focus on.	
2.	**Priority Projects Updates and Strategic Forward Planning (DM)**	
2.1	DM gave an overview of Open SU's 2023–2027 strategy. SLT has space within this to lead, represent, and advocate on key issues. Guided by their two-year "mini-strategy" (their SLT Priorities) which focuses on student experience and policy. **Strategic Themes:** - Empowering student voice - Collaboration with the university - Inclusive community building - Relevant, visible services - Organisational and environmental sustainability **Team Support & Boundaries:** - Use team space and support each other—don't work in isolation. - JS is the main contact for SLT logistics and support. - SLT members are not caseworkers—refer students to appropriate services. - Avoid managing staff, doing operational tasks, or acting as Open SU spokespeople. - Report serious behaviour issues to staff and refer to policy.	

	Scenario-Based Training: • SLT explored how to apply the "4 hats" of student leadership through interactive exercises using Mentimeter. **Project Example – Neurodivergent Student Support:** • NB shared the project's development since 2023, including collaboration across staff, students, and SLT, and its successful resolution at Conference. • CG outlined next steps, including resource promotion.	
2.3	**Updates** 1. IH provided an update on the Best Practice in Student Support project, including progress and challenges. 2. IH provided an update on the Review Student Community Activities project. 3. AW provided an update on the Apprentices Outreach project. This included increasing understanding of the Apprentice experience at the OU and promoting what Open SU has to offer to them. 4. Menopause Support. CG thanked JE on their work on the website page. This project is now complete! The website page is live now. 5. Best practice in academic experience. NC gave an update on what has happened so far, including compiling evidence from a range of sources. Now beginning phase 2, which involves liaising with stakeholders. 6. Protect the Curriculum. JF gave an update, this project was also voted on at conference. JF gave an overview of the work that has happened so far, including liaising with key OU staff members.	
2.4	**Action:** NB to follow up with new members with more details of these Priority Projects, asking for expressions of interest in which Projects new members want to join.	**NB**
2.5	**Action:** AW to take over the Wellbeing Weeks project, with support from JS	**AW & JS**
2.6	**Policy Positions Workshop** DM opened a workshop style session, where small groups discussed issues that are affecting students, why they matter, and how these could develop into areas of Policy for Open SU to focus on.	
2.7	**Action:** DM and team to take feedback and notes away and review them, with potential for branching out working groups for policy positions.	**DM**
3.	**Comms Session with MarComms (HB)**	
3.1	HB introduced the Marketing Team, including digital platform officers Andy and Keith, content officer Emily, and Jasmine (JE). Then presented a presentation involving the following:	

	Social Media Conduct: SLT members should be mindful of their public role—avoid giving the impression of speaking on behalf of OpenSU unless authorised. Personal accounts can remain private, and members can choose who to accept as followers. Avoid posting controversial content that could reflect poorly on the organisation. **Unofficial Groups & Branding:** Be cautious of unofficial groups using OU or OpenSU branding—some may appear official but are not. If unsure about a group or page, check with the Marketing Team. Only official groups are permitted to use OU branding and must follow brand guidelines. **Reporting Concerns:** If you come across misleading or unofficial content, especially on platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp, report it to the team for verification and action if needed.	
3.2	**Comms Collection** Time was allocated for generating social media content and professional headshots. Written content was also created with online attendees.	
4.	**Student Issues Reporting Tool – Discussion**	
4.1	**Improving Accessibility for Students with anxiety in the Academic Appeal Process (Score of 10, 12 voters)** Summary of issue: - Students do not think it is reasonable to have to contact their tutor in the first instance, when wanting to conduct an Academic Appeal. - Students reference the impact on mental health and stress that comes with this. - Students think having a neutral 3rd party, or going to their SST to begin with could be a solution to this issue. Discussion on this issue: - SLT recognised the importance of consistent, human support for students with mental health challenges—beyond just learning resources. The OU is exploring AI or digital assistants to support students, but there is concern this lacks the personal connection many students need. Key Issues Identified: - Lack of regular, meaningful contact with a consistent person - Need for clearer communication about support roles (e.g. SSTs, tutors)	

	• Students often unsure how to raise concerns or challenge decisions	
4.2	**Action:** Academic Experience project team to investigate creating a template message students can use to contact tutors or raise concerns, making it easier and less intimidating to start conversations.	**AW**
4.3	**Action:** Get back to the student that submitted this issue, providing an update.	**JS**
4.3	**Check-ins from tutors (Score of 10, 12 voters)** Summary of issue: • Students are calling for more dedicated contact time with their tutors and in their tutor groups, to lessen the feeling of isolation that comes with studying remotely. • 1 student suggested having monthly sessions with the tutor group, or at least monthly check ins from their tutor via email. • 1 student noted that the timings of these could never be accessible to all students, leading to disproportionate support for some. • An alternative could be Tutors having drop-in times that students can choose and book onto directly. Discussion on this issue: • SLT shared mixed experiences with tutor availability—some had regular one-to-one support, while others struggled to get responses or felt unsupported. • Concerns were raised about the feasibility of regular tutor drop-ins due to workload constraints. However, offering optional, informal contact opportunities (e.g. Teams messages or open invitations) was seen as a helpful middle ground. • Emphasis on the need for clear communication about what support is available, how to access it, and students' rights to request help. • Acknowledged that both tutors and students face time pressures. There's a need for realistic expectations and better workload planning to ensure meaningful support is possible.	
4.4	**Action:** This issue to be added to the Academic Experience priority area, perhaps develop a position statement advocating for clearer tutor contact expectations and better support planning.	**AW**
4.5	**Action:** Get back to the student that submitted this issue, providing an update.	**JS**
5.	**Any Other Business**	
5.1	**Review of Clubs and Societies** IH asked for more information, and raised concerns about the lack of formal communication regarding the current pause on forming new clubs and societies. VR gave an overview; this decision was made to avoid disruption during an ongoing review of student opportunities. The review stems	

	from the Community priority project and includes clubs, societies, meetups, and groups (excluding volunteering). Since no new clubs had been formed recently, the pause was introduced to prevent students from investing time in setups that might soon be changed. Existing clubs continue to operate as normal. SLT members requested better advance communication about significant changes to avoid confusion and ensure they are well-informed for meetings. RT recommended simplifying the Teams space with 2 channels: nice to know, Vs. Need to know. So that key information is not lost in future.		
5.2	**Action:** Review Teams Space, simplify channels.		**JS**
5.2	**Governance Review Project** Raised by IH. BP outlined the following: • The governance review was initiated by the Board of Trustees as part of a scheduled rules revision, which occurs every four years per OpenSU's governing documents. • The review aims to assess how the organisation is structured and functions, including the roles of trustees, staff, and the Student Leadership Team (SLT). An external consultant was brought in to provide an impartial perspective. • While the initial decision did not involve SLT, students will be consulted during the rules revision process. Any proposed changes will be discussed and voted on at Conference, ensuring student input is central. SLT members expressed concern about not being informed earlier. Staff acknowledged this and committed to improving information sharing, including potentially syncing trustee updates with SLT communications.		
5.3	**Pending Results**		
	The team acknowledged rumours that around 2% of students will receive pending results due to technical issues, and some modules are also delayed. SLT were urged to be prepare for some frustration on social media, but reminded that they are not responsible for resolving the issue. This is an OU-managed issue. OpenSU staff have prepared messaging if required.		

The meeting concluded at 4pm.

The next meeting will be held **online, 17 – 19 October 2025.**

	ACTIONS:	Action holder:
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