

OPEN STUDENTS' UNION

Student Leadership Team (SLT)

18 – 20 July 2025

Report of the Board of Trustees

The SLT is asked to:-

- i) **Note** this regular report from the Board of Trustees

Introduction/Background

1.1 There is a requirement under the Articles of Association for the Board of Trustees (BoT) to provide a report to the Student Leadership Team (SLT) at each meeting. This report is intended to provide the following:

- a) a formal opportunity for SLT members to raise any questions arising from the minutes or other matters relating to the role of the Trustees, and
- b) the opportunity for Trustees to raise any specific items with the SLT or report on progression of any non-routine matters.

1.2 The Board met on the 29th April 2025 online via Microsoft Teams and in-person on the OU campus. The meeting minutes are available on the website [here](#).

Discussions and outcomes from the BoT meeting

2.1 Trustees received legal induction training relating to charity governance from Tom Murdoch, Stone King.

2.2 Graeme Wood (Director of the review agency MONEYPENNYS) presented on the Commercial Review findings and recommendations. 3029 students were surveyed, some key insights were; 45.2% students surveyed had never visited the online store, 75% of revenue comes from exam paper donations, and the product range is too narrow when we consider the diverse age group of OU students. Graduation sales is currently the highest source of revenue, with potential to grow in future.

Operational concerns were highlighted, including; lack of commercial expertise in the team, inefficient stock management and high warehousing and delivery costs.

Opportunities were highlighted, including expanding the product range in the shop, adding seasonal offerings, improved system integration, alumni and life membership engagement.

Trustees were surveyed via Mentimeter on their priorities and motivations regarding the commercial strategy development.

CEO and Director of Finance plan to present proposals for next steps at the next BoT meeting

2.3 The Director of Finance and People presented the financial report. They went through the Current Year Forecast, outlining that the projected underspend is due to vacancies and paused projects, that will be carried over to the new financial year.

The Director of Finance also summarised the Subvention Grant Negotiations that have occurred between the SU and the University. Including arguing for upfront payment of the block grant. This was strongly supported by Trustees.

The University has proposed a 6% cut over two years to the SU's block grant. However, the current figure is 20% below the inflation-adjusted 2018 level. Trustees questioned the fairness of cuts tied to student number drops, given there had been no previous increase during spikes in numbers. The Director of Finance has instructed an external consultancy (Counterculture) to conduct an independent review of university calculations, so that the methodology used is clear and agreed by all.

2.4 The standing papers were received.

Staffing

3.1 We have welcomed some new faces to the team since our last update back in April. On the 8th April, Chan Howell-Walker and Alexandria (Alex) Stradling joined the EDI & Belonging Team as Student Belonging Officer and Student Advice Admin Assistant. Further good news regarding Chan is that she has recently taken on an additional part time role as People Team Administrator. Chan's appointment into this role has been very welcomed by the People Team who are grateful for the additional capacity and new member to their team.

We are also excited to announce the appointment of Angus Fok into the role of Management Accountant. Angus brings a wealth of experience to this role, having come from World Vision as their Senior Accountant. He started on the 27th May and is settling in well also. Paul Holmes has been appointed into the role of Finance Officer as of 1st July, following his heavy involvement and extensive contributions in the Xero/Moss roll out. He will be reporting to Angus.

Danielle Cafearo has returned from her maternity leave after having daughter, Bea. She is very happy to be back and ready to kickstart things off in her new role as Senior Volunteering Manager. We gladly welcomed her back in person at our June Huddle!

We are now sadly entering our last month with Sandra Carter, Diane Woodford and Anna Mahon who are leaving in July, following their decision to take

voluntary redundancy. We are currently in the process of planning a wellbeing day combined with a leaving do for them which we are looking forward to.

Beth Pacey
Chief Executive