



CEC 10/22/2

## OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

### Central Executive Committee (CEC)

28 – 30 October 2022

### EDI UPDATE\* AND REPORTS FROM OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION GROUPS

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C E C is asked to:-

- i) **receive** the reports
- ii) **note** that unless this paper is starred for discussion prior to the meeting, printed copies will not be supplied

Reports submitted by:-

OU PRIDE (Page 2)

OU Black Asian and Minoritised Ethnic Committee (Page 5)

OU Disabled Students Group (DSG) (Page 9)

\*Please note there is no EDI update in this report but it will be posted in Teams separately.

# Central Executive Committee (CEC) October 2022 REPORT FROM OU PRIDE

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## 1. Committee Updates

The OU Pride committee currently stands at 3 members, 2 elected positions and 1 co-opted position. We held the following committee meetings  
6<sup>th</sup> September – a planning session for the coming 3 months

## 2. Group Membership

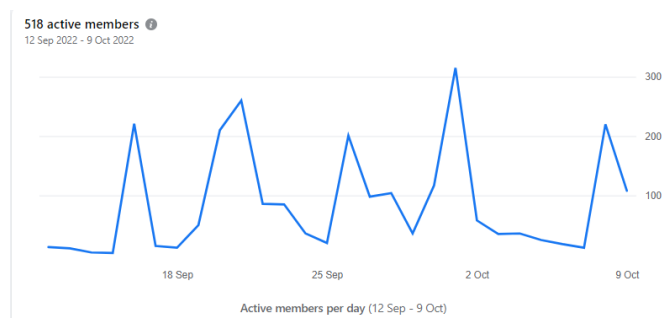
We currently have **883** members registered via OUStudents.com, which is an increase of 33 members on the last quarter.

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.

## 3. Communications

We currently have 802 members on our closed Facebook group.

Of these members, 518 were active members between 12<sup>th</sup> September and 9<sup>th</sup> October 2022.



As this period was over the summer break we were quieter on social media however there was still active chat on Pride events and news items which kept the page alive.

Our posts continue to have an average reach of between 300 and 400 and an average engagement of between 30 and 60.

Our most popular post this quarter was when we started talking about bringing back our regular events

Hi everyone!

I hope you all had a good break over the summer and are ready to start your modules again - possibly even already started!

Well OU Pride are also back and ready with some events and campaigns in the coming weeks and months and we cannot wait to get you all engaged!

This post had an reach of 310 with an engagement of 30. This was also cross posted on our Twitter feed.

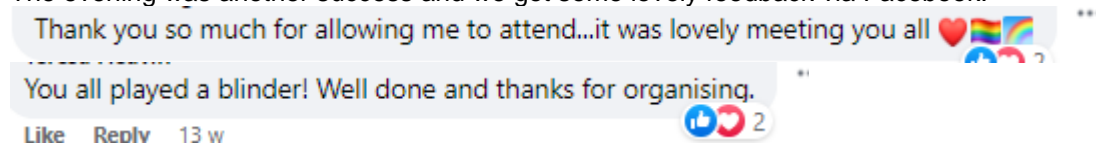
Pride events were well talked about over the summer where we encouraged our members to post pictures from any they managed to get to, so although we didn't get to any events as a group we felt represented.

#### 4. Events & Activities

During this quarter we scaled down our regular events due to the summer break.

On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July we held an online OU Pride Does PRIDE event as we could not organise any face to face Pride events this year.

We ran a murder mystery event as this is always very popular with our members. Anyone who signed up for a part was sent a pack with a tote bag and mug (with our logo!) and some stickers and badges. The evening was another success and we got some lovely feedback via Facebook:



On Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> of July a EDI Summer Jamboree event was arranged by the previous VP EDI Patrice Belton. At OU Pride we were asked to arrange and host a quiz to host as part of the days events. Alex created the quiz with a section related to disability pride as it was disability pride month and he also included a small section covering questions relating to the B.A.M.E cohort to ensure good inclusion throughout. The turnout for the quiz was reasonable, with an estimation of 10-15 participants. It was also a good opportunity to introduce the OU Pride committee to members who may have only previously associated with DSG or B.A.M.E.

Prizes were provided by ourselves and the winners were pleased with the packs they received.

We restarted our Come and Chat in September and it was lovely to hear what some of our members had been up to over their summer break.

We have kept these as a regular monthly event on the last Friday of each month for the rest of the year.

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October, Steve represented OU Pride at the Freshers Fair where we advised new and returning students of the support available from the group; sought feedback and suggestions on potential future events; and raised £100 for LGBTQIA+ counselling charities ahead of World Mental Health Day.

It was a great event and a fantastic opportunity to connect with students and other groups and societies.



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

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July was International Non-Binary Day

On this day we shared the Non-Binary flag and shared a link to Stonewalls '10 ways to step up as an ally to non-binary people'. This post reached 98 people with an engagement of 11.

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September was Bisexual Visibility Day

On this day we shared the Bisexual flag and the definition of what it means to be 'Bi'

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October was World Mental Health Day.

We shared the WHO's theme for the year which is 'making mental health for all a reality' alongside apps and helplines for anyone struggling.

We have a session on the second week of Freshers and are really looking forward to getting word out about what we stand for.

## **5. Student issues & challenges**

Over this period the forums have been quiet.

One of our new members raised a few technical issues with the website which we were happy to pass on the relevant technical areas within the university.

## **6. Any other initiatives or updates**

December marks the end of our 2-year tenure in our posts so we are planning an event to mark the end of our term.

**Lyndsay Thomson**

**Chair**

**For and on behalf of OU PRIDE**

## **1. Committee Updates**

The (Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic) BAME Committee currently has a few vacancies.

Eesha Waseem has taken over the role of Chair from Tracey Inverary, who has had to resign due to health issues and workload. Hope Autumn-River has also resigned from her Wellbeing and Support Officer role.

Membership currently consists of 6 members.

**Chair** – Eesha Waseem

**Secretary** – Shanice Henry

**Events and Communications Officer** - Narraser Gordon

**Change and Awareness Officer (Culture and Campaigns)** – Zara Khan

**Change and Awareness Officer (Community Cohesion)** – Vacant

**International Officer** – Sristi Sengupta

**Wellbeing and Support Officer** – Vacant

**General Committee Member** – Rukhsaar Bibi

**Ex-officio Committee member and Vice-President EDI** - Vacant

## **2. Group Membership**

**BAME Group Membership** currently consisting of 149 members.

**BAME Facebook Membership** currently consisting of 146 members.

As new students join the university, the BAME Forum has been moderately active. Committee members continue to engage with students.

## **3. Communications**

Committee members continue to interact with the BAME forum and Facebook group but promoting events, information as well as interacting with student's posts.

'Slack' and the 'WhatsApp' Committee group have been effective for encouraging committee members to communicate. However, communication does remain an issue.

The Projects Officer and Chair had a meeting to discuss upcoming events as well as communication within the Committee. The Chair then reached out to Committee members via the WhatsApp group, asking what the best way to communicate is for them. A committee member mentioned creating a 'Group email.' The Group email has yet to be made as the Chair is concerned there may be confusion with Committee members on which platform to post updates or questions.

When updates are posted on 'Slack,' encouragement to view the messages on Slack are made by the Chair via the WhatsApp group.

The Chair has recently reached out to Committee Officers via email for group/individual meetings.

#### **4. Events & Activities**

##### **Events**

OUSA Twitter Takeover: 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Freshers Drop-In Session: 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022

OUSA Podcast : Recording Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022

##### **Meetings**

###### ***EDI Plan Consultation Event***

Previous Change and Awareness Officer, Community Cohesion – Eesha Waseem, attended. Event was for students to inform and discuss the EDI Plan.

###### ***Meeting with Digital Communications Officer – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022***

Meeting occurred between Chair and Hannah Prue regarding OUSA Twitter Takeover.

*Discussion:* To inform the Chair on how the Twitter Takeover would work, what the schedule for the day will look like and what information will need to be tweeted –

information regarding the BAME group, links to the Facebook/Forum page, as well as information regarding Freshers and By-Elections.

**Meeting with Chair and Events and Communication Officer – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

Meeting occurred between Chair, Eesha Waseem and Events and Communications Officer, Narraser Gordon

*Discussion:* To discuss ideas on Black History Month events and actions needed to be taken. Ideas such as Quiz night and Movie night have been brought up. Events and Communications Officer to post an ‘Inspirational person’ on the Facebook page.

The Chair is also part of the **Steering Groups** review. Meetings occur weekly.

**Meeting with Rehana Awan - Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> October.**

The Chair has been invited to meet with Rehana.

*Discussion:* The intention is to establish links with the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic group and Rehana and to build upon the work previous VP EDI, Patrice Belton has set up.

**OUSA Podcast – Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October**

International Officer, Sristi Sengupta, is in conversation with Reiss Miller, Conference and Association Project Manager, to be a guest in the OUSA Podcast for the 50<sup>th</sup> university anniversary.

*Discussion:* This podcast will be celebrating diversity within the student community, as well as discussing the Association and University’s work within the EDI area. This podcast shall be edited and uploaded the following week.

Before their resignation, Wellbeing and Support Officer continued to publish wellbeing series in “The Hoot” and Group forum. Wellbeing and Support Officer engaged with Facebook members.

Change and Awareness Officer (Community Cohesion) has also published articles on “The Hoot” and Group forum and Facebook group.

## **5. Student issues & challenges**

There are some concerns on how our current social media platforms/the Group forum are used as some students do not have Facebook.

Moving forward, Committee can discuss what social media platforms would be best and whether students would like specific platforms to be used.

There have also been concerns on the university's promotion on Black History Month. It seems the information is not easily accessible, therefore numbers for events may be low.

## **6. Any other initiatives or updates**

Chair will continue to work on communication challenges within the Committee and will work with members to ensure they are not struggling within their role.

Chair will also encourage committee members to host more online sessions to promote student engagement.

Events and Communications Officer, Narraser's 'Inspirational person' to be promoted by Hannah Prue, Digital Communications Officer. Posts to be created into a 'The Hoot' article on behalf of the Committee. This shall then be promoted on the OUStudents pages.

**Eesha Waseem**  
**Committee Chair**

**For and on behalf of BLACK ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC GROUP**



**Central Executive Committee (CEC)**  
**October 2022**  
**REPORT FROM THE DISABLED STUDENTS GROUP (DSG)**

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## **1. Committee Updates**

The current Committee is made up of 9 members – 1 Chairperson, 1 Secretary, 1 Events and Communications Officer and 6 Ordinary Members.

Since July's CEC Report, we have had some changes. We gained 2 new members in August, Stephanie Stubbins and Nichola Connolly, through a Co-Option election process with unanimous support from the current committee. Both are proactive in other areas of the Association, and previous committee members of the D S G. One of our secretaries, Kate Withers, resigned in August, leaving us with one Secretary, Laura Cranstoun. We also lost another member in September, Hannah Boyland. There are no plans to replace our last member, confident we have a strong and experienced committee.

Dates of committee meetings held since July's report:

- 21<sup>st</sup> July
- 25<sup>th</sup> August
- 22<sup>nd</sup> September

## **2. Group Membership**

Students' Association registered members: 888

Facebook: 2296

Twitter: 614

We have seen a steady increase in membership on all of our platforms. This is due to our active committee work, ensuring that we are present, engaging with students, organising and hosting a variety of events, and reacting to the needs and enquiries of our diverse community consistently and positively.

## **3. Communications**

### Website

The DSG committee have been posting most of our content directly on social media platforms. However, we point new members towards the website to request to join the group, read about the committee and get links for other social media. We hope to publish our newsletter on our website and increase the number of disability and study related resources available there.

### Newsletter

We are in the process of preparing our October edition of the Newsletter which we are hoping to have sent out to members quarterly. Increased communication with our members will hopefully lead to increased engagement with activities. There have

been some delays due to accessibility concerns, but we hope to find a solution that fits our ideals and is simple for students to engage with.

We are looking into the possibility of more formats for sharing content including podcast episodes and Hoot articles.

### Social Media

#Sharingpositivity on Fridays continues to attract a stable level of engagement with an average of 6 likes and 10 comments per post. We have recently started posting this hashtag on Twitter where there is significantly less engagement.

#NDandMHachievements are posted every Monday on both Facebook and Twitter. We are planning to celebrate Black History Month on social media in October using an interview published in The Hoot and a thread of social media posts highlighting Black Disabled activists. We will continue to celebrate Awareness days throughout the rest of the year and beyond. We hope this will encourage members to get involved and increase engagement.

### D S G Forum

The Forum is steadily active, though more active with students beginning their new modules.

The most popular topics students post about, or engage in, include:

- D S A applications;
- How studying will affect their benefits (such as E S A);
- How health impacts studies and deadlines;
- Sustaining motivation and positive Mental Health during stressful study periods;
- Sharing information, support and awareness of various conditions.
- Introducing themselves to the D S G community.

We have continued engaging with students through our #SharingPositivity post at the end of the week and have introduced #NDandMHachievements posts at the beginning of the week. Students appear to enjoy adding to the threads and sharing their positive achievements in these areas.

In line with our *Awareness Days* campaign, our committee members regularly post (3-4 times per month) information raising awareness of different health conditions, disabilities, mental health and neurodivergence. This is an opportunity for students to engage, be signposted for support and share their lived experiences.

## **4. Events & Activities**

We continue to host a monthly drop-in on the last Friday of each month from 5-6:30pm. There is usually a small but regular attendance. We are hoping that following the success of Freshers, we will be able to welcome more members to these sessions. We are also planning to hold a special drop-in session around the festive period, possibly including a Quiz as in 2021.

D S G Fresher's Event (On Campus) - 8<sup>th</sup> October

One of the committee members represented the DSG at the face-to-face Freshers Fair. These events are particularly useful to raise awareness of the DSG for new students.

#### Fresher's Introductory Session and Q & A (Online) - 12<sup>th</sup> October

There was a relatively large turnout for this session with 40 guests in attendance. Hosted by our Chair Marilyn with support from Becca (Events & Comms) and Stephanie (Committee Member)

#### Awareness Days

We are committed to celebrating at least 2 Awareness Days a month, hoping to include one serious cause and one more light-hearted day for our members to enjoy. For example, in October this will be Black Cat Day on the 27<sup>th</sup> October

We are also planning to take part in a Social Media Takeover in partnership with the OU students association on the 19<sup>th</sup> October to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its founding.

### **5. Student issues & challenges**

#### Alternative Formats

Issues with delayed or missing alternative formats are once again a problem that students raise around September / October. This year we have encouraged students to get in touch with us so we can forward the issues to the students' association staff, as there is not a VP EDI at this time. A lot of upset and frustration has been expressed, as students feel they are at a disadvantage compared to other students who can plan ahead or get started early. Having disabilities or health problems makes it even more imperative to have a plan in place, as fluctuations in health can be unpredictable, triggered by stress and require time and energy to manage. Some students are particularly unhappy as they have had similar issues in the past and dealing with problems repeatedly every year can put people off from wanting to continue with their studies.

#### Concerns about benefits

Students have expressed worries about enrolling on a degree and their benefits being affected. In some cases, it can be difficult to find accurate and up to date information. The committee are signposting to relevant resources wherever possible. It would be useful if the students' association could provide a factsheet or Q&A resource for us to refer to, or forward on to students.

#### Studying with a disability, health condition etc.

The DSG community is particularly valuable when it comes to easing worries about studying with a disability or health condition. People share tips for managing study time, useful apps or resources, what to expect from DSA assessments and so on. It is wonderful to see students helping each other and to facilitate a space in which they feel safe and comfortable to talk about sensitive subjects.

#### Support for Dyslexia (Forum)

Studying with Dyslexia, in particular, appears to be a concern for many students in our Forum community. We continue to signpost students to OU web pages, which offer information, advice and strategies for 'Specific learning difficulties (SpLD)'. However, as the numbers of people seeking advice is so high compared to other needs, it suggests that further support is required for this specific group in our community. The threads on the forum around this topic are very popular, with great compassion from peers who have similar experiences and concerns. It would be advantageous if the committee were able to give more comprehensive support. Our forum moderator does not have personal experience with Dyslexia, and so her support is limited. To address this issue, some training on SpLD may be very useful.

## **6. Any other initiatives or updates**

### Student Support Groups Review

The students' association is conducting a Student Support Groups Review. This is a fantastic opportunity to develop our strategy for supporting students to the best of our ability, to make the committee more efficient and in turn, improve the work we do behind the scenes.

Rebecca Phoenix, Laura Cranstoun & Marilyn Salstrom  
DSG Committee Officers  
For and on behalf of the Disabled Students Group

