



OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Student Leadership Team (SLT)

6 – 8 October 2023

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update

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 July SLT weekend.

2.2 With a year left on the SLT's terms we looked at the Priorities we'd chosen last September and discussed whether these were the same priorities we had now and if not, what would new priorities be. It was decided that the renewed priorities for this Steering Group would be as follows:

- Launching the EDI Newsletter

- Challenge the OU to consider that standardised approach to assessments and marking is not appropriate for all Neurodiverse students and that consideration for tailored adjustments may need to be given
 - Roll out 'General Accessibility Training' for all staff and volunteers
 - Create an Action Plan to improve support for Trans students
 - Create an Action Plan to improve support for Neurodivergent students
 - Look to present at a Conference on the subject of EDI/Distance Learning challenges
- 2.3 During the SLT meeting we spent the time to discuss a proposal to merge the DSG with the Neurodiversity Club, the discussion of which you can read in the SLT minutes from July.
- 2.4 Since the meeting we would like to share the following progress:
- The EDI Newsletter first edition is planned to be released on the 20th October
 - We have drafted a Trans Inclusion statement that has been reviewed by our legal advisors and will now be presented to the Board of Trustees for sign off.
 - We have begun creating General Accessibility Training.

3. Completed or Planned EDI Work

- 3.1 Over the summer months we have been predominantly pushing awareness of the Individual Representation service now that results have been shared (or not as the case may be) and modules have come to an end. We are aware that there are a large number of students whose results are still 'pending' as well as a high volume of Complaints with the OU that has created a backlog.
- 3.2 Over the summer we have been recruiting again for our Library Study Volunteers. Training has now completed and they will be researching our Student in Secure Environments request very soon.
- 3.3 The fourth edition of our Hoot for SiSE Magazine has begun. It will contain a Conference special and Tom Mitchell (Conference Project Manager) is considering how Students in Secure Environments might be able to get involved in some of the initiatives planned.
- 3.4 Peer Support has officially been closed. We held a farewell social with the remaining volunteers where the volunteers were able to share their memories and experiences of their time as Peer Supporters.
- 3.5 Our first EDI Roadshow event is set to take place during Freshers and will be around "Celebrating Differences and Creating Unity". During the session we will explore why EDI is important and should be on everyone's agenda as well as

presenting our brand-new campaign idea and demonstrate how students can get involved.

- 3.6 As mentioned in the last update, we're creating an EDI Newsletter that will be shared across all the Groups and include updates from all (promoting intersectionality's) but also promoting the work our team are doing. The first edition of the EDI Newsletter is planned to be released on October 20th.
- 3.7 A lot of the work over the summer has gone on our Team's new Business Plan and setting priorities.

Verity Robinson

Head of EDI and Student Welfare

4. Groups Update

Below are the updates from the Groups.

Report from OU Pride

Committee Updates

The OU Pride committee consists of 4 members, Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and our recently appointed Comms Officer following a co-option process.

We have also had the following committee meetings:

Thursday 20th July – general planning meeting

Wednesday 16th August – committee meeting

Group Membership

We currently have 642 members registered via OUStudents.com. This number is an increase of 32 since June

We continue to reach out to our membership via the forums and social media asking them to join in and asking for ideas on events we can run.

3. Communications

We currently have 873 members on our closed Facebook group, this is an increase of 31 on last quarter.

We have had a recent influx of new members, we believe due to new students joining the OU.

Of these members, 500 were active members between 1st July 2023 and 17th September 2023.



Despite this period spanning 'holiday' time for the majority of our members we have found an increase in active members.

The most popular posts relate to an ongoing issue which we will talk about later in this report.

Due to the influx of new members we put up a post welcoming them and a reminder for everyone of the other platforms we are set up on.

Hello, new folks and welcome to OUSA Pride! I'm the Communications Officer, and it was pointed out to me by another member that not everyone was aware of the other Pride channels that are operating.

For those of you who are old school, there are the OUSA forums
<https://learn1.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=100061...>

(You can access this by joining the OU Pride Group here:
<https://www.oustudents.com/surveys/19/>)

And for those of you who still insist on using the crazy guys site, there is
https://twitter.com/OU_Pride

And hopefully, now the committee are all back off our holidays, we'll get a Threads account set up soon too. To clarify, we all went on separate holidays, not on the same one; that'd just be weird.

Additionally, there is also a separate space that is run by and for our trans and non-binary members who would like to interact and communicate freely without any fear of any Gender Critical interference; please contact me for details.

I'm sure you're all itching to get into your studies (I'm off to WHSmiths this afternoon to get my new My Little Pony pencil case, shatterproof ruler and Helix Oxford Maths Set), but please, keep an eye out for the multiple events we are running between now and the New Year - more details to follow!

Edited to add:

We've woken up the Instagram account, too
https://www.instagram.com/ou_pride/

And we've also fearlessly jumped headlong into the 21st century, with a Threads account.
https://www.threads.net/@ou_pride

We have reinvigorated our Instagram account.



We have also set up an account on the platform 'Threads'

OUPRIDE

ou_pride threads.net

PRIDE

The OU Students Association LGBT+ Group 🏳️‍🌈 Devoted to providing support and equality for LGBT+ students, staff and alumni of the OU. ❤️

Events & Activities

Due to the holidays, we did not have any 'Come and Chat' events however these are restarting shortly.

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

Thursday 6th July was Omnisexual Visibility Day On this day we shared what being Omnisexual means and we also shared the flag and what the 5 stripes mean.

Tuesday 11th July to Monday 17th July was Non-Binary Awareness Week

We started off with the history and meaning of the Non-Binary flag

We followed up with 10 ways to be a good ally to non-binary people, a reminder that it doesn't matter how someone dresses, if they are Non-Binary they are Non-Binary.

We finished the week with a useful reminder on the correct use of pronouns.

Friday 14th July was Non-Binary People Day

On this day we celebrated some celebrities who are breaking the mould!

There were a few PRIDE events throughout the quarter that we promoted as much as we could:

Saturday 15th July was Glasgow Pride (largest ever Pride event in Glasgow! – amazing!)

Thursday 27th July was a Pride Street Market in Glasgow

Saturday 29th July was West Lothian Pride and Belfast Pride

Saturday 19th August was Trans Pride Scotland

Student issues & challenges

Some members of OU Pride took their dissatisfaction with the OU and the support provided to the Gender Critical Research Network to the media and an article in an online only LGBTQ+ news source is anticipated in the Autumn.

This was swiftly followed by a reply to the letter sent to the OU and OUSA regarding the creation of the OU Gender Critical Research Network. Unfortunately, it was felt that this reply did not answer the questions asked within the letter. However, the OU have said they are willing to talk to OU Pride about the issues raised. A reply has gone back to arrange this.

In the meantime, we have been speaking to our members to clarify points raised on the forums and to ensure that the information we have is factually correct and can be substantiated. This meeting went very well and was useful in building back bridges damaged following the previous letter to the OU.

Any other initiatives or updates

Lyndsay attended an Assertiveness course with 'Happy' which was fantastic with lots of helpful hints and tips to handle difficult situations.

We have an event booked for Freshers fortnight and are looking forward to meeting some new members and hopefully gaining some more.

Thursday 24th August Steve, our Vice-Chair attended the first Group Collaboration meeting, hosted by OUSA. We look forward to attending these meetings and being a key member of the group.

Lyndsay Thomson

Chair

For and on behalf of OU PRIDE

Update from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group

Committee Updates

- We ran a Co-Option to try and recruit new members, but we had poor response. We did fortunately have a candidate who was appointed the Events Member – Lataya Gbadamosi
- Gaurang and Larresha have had various meeting and made connections with, PLA, Careers Service, EDI, Volunteering Service, and BHM Steering group.
- We had our first committee meeting on Sunday 06th August
- We are still all finding our feet, and learning the most effective way to work as a team as we are restricted by time, distance and availability.

Group Membership

There are 184 Group members registered via oustudents.com. We have not seen a large increase in group membership, but we hope to see an increase after our events for freshers. During freshers we will be encouraging students to apply for the 2 vacant roles.

Communications

Larresha is moderating the forums and have increased the amount of posts, but we have had little engagement. Gaurang (Chair) moderates FB.

Events & Activities

Due to time obligations as well as personal commitments, we have agreed the following:

- 21st September – Larresha will be assisting the PLA service workshop.
- 26th September - Larresha will be assisting the PLA service workshop.
- 30th September - Larresha & Lataya will be hosting a F2F freshers stall on OU MK HQ
- Between 3rd October & Wed 25th Oct – Larresha/Lataya will support the BHM Film Club with Darren Gray

- 7th October - BAME Committee will host their first monthly drop in in conjunction with fresher's week.

Student issues & challenges

We have no student issues reported as we have had little engagement. Our biggest challenge is increasing the engagement of our students.

Any other initiatives or updates

In the next 6-9 months we want to focus on:

- Recruit additional members for our 2 vacant positions
- Increasing & retaining our student membership and engagement
- Agreeing on re-branding in time for next year's freshers
- Agreeing on a schedule of monthly committee drop in's for students to engage with the team
- Regular posting & moderating the BAME forum
- Regular posting & moderating the FB page
- Setting up a monthly news email to members.

Larresha Fabunmi, Vice-Chair
Vice-Chair of the BAME Committee
For and on behalf of BAME Committee

Disabled Students Group

There is no update from the DSG on this occasion.