

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**Student Leadership Team (SLT)**

6 – 8 October 2023

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The SLT is asked to:-

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

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.
2. The Board met on the 25th July 2023 on Campus and online via Microsoft Teams. The meeting minutes are available to view [here](#).
3. The Deputy President provided an Officer update and reported on the three headline issues faced by the SLT: capacity, engagement, and the resignation of the FBL Rep and removal of the International Rep. The resignation and removal of these two reps has left the SLT with five vacancies. The Scotland Rep has also been non-engaged for a sustained period of time, adding to the reduction of active members. The introduction of co-option in August, and the review of some of the roles, will help to ensure there is adequate representation across the team. The Director of Engagement is also leading on a 360 review of the onboarding process which aims to help improve retention.
4. Furthermore, the Deputy President outlined that the UCU marking and assessment boycott has been going on since April 2023 and has affected over 3,300 students. The Association carried out an informal poll of students which showed that over 12,000 students support the right to take part in industrial action, but not this particular tactic. Subsequently, the relationship between the Association and UCU was impacted but eventually lead to a joint statement calling for a return to negotiations.
5. The Head of Strategy and Insight presented the draft four year strategy for 2023-24 to 2023-27 for approval. A big steer from the BoT and others was for the

Association to do less but better, and to ensure that everything has a clear purpose for students. The mission remained the same but the vision and values have been updated. Objectives have also been set to support and achieve the overall vision. The next steps for the strategy are to develop a communication plan, design the structure of the strategy and then launch it in October. The Trustees approved the Association Strategy 2023/24 – 2026/27.

6. The Associate Director: Finance & Compliance presented the draft budget for 2023/24. The budget allowed for an in-year overspend of up to £91,000 and also included funding from reserves for individual representation and investment in the development of the Civica election app. Overall, the Association will be carrying over £1.7 million in cash reserves from 2023-24 with £1.5 million of that currently in fixed term deposits. After an in-depth explanation of the budget, the Trustees approved the 2023/24 budget.
7. The Chief Executive detailed the progress of the Governance Review work as she listed potential changes to some of the vacant and over-worked roles, which would occur as a one-year trial, prior to the 2024 student elections. The potential changes included; VP Student Support becoming VP Student Welfare and shared cross-working with VP EDI; introduction of a Postgraduate Rep, removal of the England and Europe Rep to name some of them. Trustees approved the trial of the co-option of the two new roles as well as approving the removal of the England Rep. Due to mixed opinions on the status of the Europe Rep, it was agreed that a decision would not be made until the other two absent Trustees have had a say. Trustees also approved to discontinue work on the remaining Governance Review recommendations due to limited time and resource.
8. The Trustees were then joined in the meeting by a Trans-female OU Student to talk to Trustees about the recent issues the Trans community were facing with certain groups in the OU. A Trans Inclusion Statement and a definition of Transphobia has been drafted which can be published when unacceptable behaviour needs to be called out. The Board emphasised that the Association was dedicated to working on these issues together.
9. Staffing matters: The Association staff team has seen a few changes in the last quarter, with new staff members starting and others leaving. At the end of August, Denisa Bartova left the Association to start her maternity leave, as well as her contract ending. All the staff wished her well on her next ventures and thanked her for the hard work she has put in in the year she has been with us. Sarah Smerald returned back from maternity leave on Monday 11th September and is gradually easing herself back into the role of Volunteering and Representation Administrator. At the end of August, Elie Sear (Campaigns Officer) and Jazz Simpson (Volunteer and Policy Officer) commenced their roles with the Association and have settled in really well. It was great to be able to welcome them to the team in person at the Wellbeing day on the 23rd August. Similarly, Tom Mitchell, Gemma Church and Emily Cox have hit the ground running in their new roles as Projects Manager, Senior Fundraiser and Contents Officer.

Due to staff capacity and resource being low in some of the teams, certain individuals have temporarily increased their hours to offer support in another team. Chibwe Mushibwe has been assisting with OUSET cases and helping the Business Services Team for the past couple of months, whilst Ciara Linehan has just started

within the Strategy and Insights team, offering a day's administrative support. They have both proved invaluable.

10. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th October 2023.

Beth Metcalf
Chief Executive