

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

11 – 13 October 2024

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.

Executive Summary

- 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.

Updates from the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) Priority Areas

- 2.1 Whilst we eagerly anticipate the priorities from the new SLT we were able to tick off 'Presenting our work at a Conference' from last year's priorities. I thoroughly enjoyed delivering a lightning talk presentation about our Library Study Volunteer service to the to the RAISE Conference on the 11th September.

Completed or Planned EDI Work

- 3.1 As well as concentrating on Central Disciplinary Cases (CDC) for this academic year we are also arranging to be featured by all Academic Conduct Officer letters to students (circa 1400 sent

annually). We are also looking into upgrading our case management system.

- 3.2 Library Study Volunteer requests are always quiet over the summer which is when we run our recruitment. We have successfully recruited and trained 12 new volunteers with 9 continuing. They are now ready and waiting for the new year's requests to come rolling in.
- 3.3 We 'soft' launched OU Students Chat (the Aluminare platform) to Group members on the 4th September. Take up has varied by Group but after 3 weeks (and only one email communication about it) the number of members in each Group looks as follows:
- BAME Group – 18
 - DSG – 111
 - OU Pride 45
- Our Team has set a target of having 15% of each Group's members on the platform by January 2025.
- 3.4 Group Committee Appointments were opened on the 23rd September for all three Group Committees. The Team have worked hard along with members of the Volunteering and Representation and Digital Communications teams to ensure that the recruitment will be a successful one. Recruitment is open until 4th November so anything you can do to help us promote these/share a post when you see it would be much appreciated!
- 3.5 We were involved with the Race Equality Charter's Self-Assessment Team (RECSAT) survey that launched back in April and we've finally had some findings from the survey (which closed in June). We had hosted a link to the survey in a news article and promoted this for the team. I'm delighted to share that from that link 733 students engaged with the survey, with 516 completing it in its entirety. (Total number of completed responses was 1327 so we hugely contributed to this work!)
- 3.6 We launched a survey for Neurodivergent Students back at the beginning of July to seek information about their experiences studying at the OU and to see where the gaps are that we can campaign the OU to fill. It was opened until the end of August and we received 241 responses! Evaluation is currently underway and an action plan is being created.
- 3.7 We have launched an Accessibility tab on our website that houses [our new Accessibility Statement](#) that we published in August. The Accessibility Standards Working Group have also been working on

a number of staff guides and checklists to use when creating content and presentations. We are also in the process of having the DSG's brand colours changed as we have been made aware that they do not meet the colour contrast requirements.

3.8 This next academic year's work for the Team sees a focus on:

- Volunteer management and retention
- Accessibility
- Providing safe and relevant services and activities
- Sustainability

Groups Update

4.1 Report from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Group:

Since June 2024, with the help of the EDI team, we have successfully filled some of the previously vacant roles within the committee including those of the Vice-Chair and the Events Officer. The onboarding for these roles has already begun, with one member even completing their training. I am confident that their collective future involvement will drive further momentum.

Unfortunately, due to the short timeframe, the committee won't be able to send representation to the Welcome Event. However, we are committed to supporting future events and will ensure our participation moving forward.

Vacant roles are still being advertised on various OUSA social media platforms and we are actively engaging with candidates to fill them soon. With these roles filled, I am confident that our committee will be fully back on track to achieve our goals.

I look forward to providing a more comprehensive update on our continued progress in the near future.

Best wishes,

Gaurang Ghare

Chair of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Committee

4.2 Report from the Disabled Students Group:

The past month has been busy with new membership requests to both OU Connect and Facebook where we signpost the main OUSA page where required to encourage membership. There are many questions about DSA and student services queries which we have offered advice

on and other members have added support. We have also responded to a number of queries regarding use of the OU teaching software and websites, how to navigate and find tutors and what they are there for. We have to understand that when first presented with the teaching style of the OU, it can be quite a lot to take in and some people do face a situation with it where support has been vital.

We've had a busy time with drop-ins, the launch of OUSA student connect, our Facebook and forums communities. The drop-ins continue to have a very passionate and strong group. We now have 111 members on Student Connect, and everyone is posting lots! We have done a lot of signposting and support, particularly with Disabled Students Allowance issues (in August a quarter of threads in our Facebook group were DSA-related) and more recently alternative formats issues and complaints (where we have signposted the Individual Representation Service). The whole committee have supported each other with moderating Facebook, posting useful information, approving members, helping members and encouraging interaction.

[We also have great examples of members supporting members in the drop-in!]

Our plan now is for Invisible Disabilities Week at the end of October where we hope to share peoples stories of having invisible disabilities which has been met with some fantastic responses, we already have one blog and know of more coming in, where we also want a special drop in for the week to note its importance to the group. Plans for Christmas will be forthcoming going forward and we have advertised the roles with the group members to gather applications as we are aware that we have served this year with only 3 people but I'd like to thank both of them for their unwavering support and drive.

4.3 Report from OU Pride:

We have a committee of 3. Chair, Vice Chair and Events Officer

On our closed Facebook group we have 916 members which is an increase of 13 members since July.

On social media we have been sharing the dates of all Pride events throughout Great Britain, with links, where possible, to the Prides online presence.

We have been hosting our monthly come and chat events on Teams as usual, with the exception of August, which we decided to postpone due

to students being on their summer break and we also gave ourselves a break.

In June, this was the 26th at 7:30pm and we had 5 students who attended.

In July, this was on the 26th at 7:30pm and we had 0 students attend. We attributed this to the cessation of studying for most students.

In September this will be on the 27th at 7:30pm.

We have also ran a number of extra events during this quarter.

The most significant being our annual virtual pride event where we invited members to join us for an evening of games, quizzes and discussions of all things pride, including a short LGBTQIA+ history section.

Those who attended this event were provided free goodie bags as a way to say thank you for attending and we also had prizes on offer for those who won some of our games during the evening. This was held on July 6th via teams, and we had 15 members attend that evening.

Alex and Scott got approval to get T-shirts printed with OU prides logo on as means to identify us prior to their attendance at Manchester pride. This was our first in-person attendance to a pride event. It was decided to not take part in the actual parade however we did take along some goodies with OU Prides logo on, and instead to provide a meet up point for any students at OU Pride to give them an opportunity to come meet some of the committee members in person and to say hello!

Unfortunately, no students did greet Alex and Scott however some goodies were given out in an attempt to raise awareness for who OU Pride are and what we do, and some clips of the parade were posted on our social media platforms.

Alex has been doing planning with regards to our Welcome Week slot which is on October 1st at 6pm. We will be doing introductions to the committee, what we do and who we are, followed by a short quiz.

Future events:

Halloween murder mystery

Thanksgaying – Thanksgiving day twist to our usual come and chat in November.

Christmas social/games night.

Verity Robinson
Head of EDI and Student Welfare