



**CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEC)
22 – 24 April 2022**

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held via the online forums from 15 April – 22 April 2022 and via Teams on 23 April 2022.

PRESENT

Patrice Belton, Vice President Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)
Ian Cheyne – Deputy President
Nichola Connolly – Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS)
Gareth Jones - Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Business & Law (FBL)
Sarah Jones – President (Chair)
Cinnomen McGuigan – Vice President Education
Matt Porterfield - Vice President Administration
Lucy Richardson – Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Open and Access
Anca Seaton - Vice President Community
Hanna Silk – Area Association Representative (AAR) for Wales
Bev Smit – Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)
Danielle Smith – Student Member of Council
Stephanie Stubbins – Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)
Kate Wells – Area Association Representative (AAR) for Europe
Fanni Zombor - Vice President Engagement

IN ATTENDANCE

Rebecca Coster – Strategy and Insights Assistant (part)
Gabriella Cull – Executive Support Assistant (minutes)
Georgia Demopoulou – Projects Officer (Student Community) (part)
Sue Maccabe – Head of Strategy and Insight
Lara Munday – Projects Officer (Student Community) (part)
Dan Moloney – Director of Engagement
Jess Smith – Head of Community
Gabby Willis – Digital Communications Officer (part)

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INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

A. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

The President welcomed the CEC to the April CEC meeting, the penultimate meeting of their terms.

B. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Alison Kingan – Vice President Student Support

C. MINUTES

C.1 The minutes of the last meeting (CEC 12/21/M) were approved.

D. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

D.1 None raised.

SECTION A: ITEMS FOR APPROVAL AND REPORT
Taken on the Forum Meeting between 15 April – 22 April 2022

- 1. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** **CEC 04/22/1**
 - 1.1 The CEC received the reports.
- 2. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION GROUPS** **CEC 04/22/2**
 - 2.1 The CEC thanked the Chairs of the Groups for taking the time to put together such informative and engaging reports.
- 3. RECEIVED: REPORT OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES** **CEC 04/22/3**
 - 3.1 The CEC recognised the lack of engagement towards the committee meetings, highlighted by the decreasing attendance to these meetings. The FBL FAR queried what could be done to improve it. VP Community outlined that she wasn't sure if all societies have to send their representative to the Societies Committee but that she would investigate this and report back.
- 4. RECEIVED: FINANCE REPORT** **CEC 04/22/4**

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- 4.1 The CEC recognised that the rate of inflation and outcome of the USS pensions negotiations could cause negative consequences on future subvention negotiations. The Head of Finance and Resources confirmed that the core subvention for 2022/23 will increase by 4.13%. However, this will not cover all of the Association's cost pressures given the predictions for inflation, the increase in National Insurance contributions, staff increments and the staff pay award.
- 4.2 The CEC thanked the Head of Finance and Resources for her finance update.

SECTION B: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Taken on the Forum Meeting between 1 October – 12 October 2021

- 5. RECEIVED: BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT** **CEC 04/22/5**
 - 5.1 With recent changes within the staff team, the CEC requested an updated organisational chart to display the new staff members so that they could better understand who has joined which team. The CEC expressed for an update to be given regarding return to face to face activities. The President explained she will meet the Chief Executive soon to discuss this.
- 6. RECEIVED: WEBSITE UPDATE** **CEC 04/22/6**
 - 6.1 This item is of a confidential nature so has been reserved to the confidential minutes.
- 7. RECEIVED: ANNUAL TUTOR AWARDS** **CEC 04/22/7**
 - 7.1 The CEC expressed their excitement of this initiative and noticed the vast progress, and hard work that the FBL FAR had put in to make this event possible. They hoped for it to continue every year and become a 'business as usual' initiative. They thanked the FBL FAR for all his efforts and dedication to getting it up and running.
- 8. RECEIVED: STUDENT CHAT PLATFORM** **CEC 04/22/8**
 - 8.1 The CEC commented on the vast potential of this chat platform and how promising the project is. They look forward to seeing the progress made on it.
- 9. RECEIVED: OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION SUSTAINABILITY WORKING GROUP** **CEC 04/22/9**
 - 9.1 The CEC were pleased to see work taking place in such an important area. Sustainability is an area that an increasing number of students are becoming more conscious about and therefore, the CEC recognised the importance of keeping up pace with these required societal changes.
 - 9.2 The composition of the working group was questioned as currently it is only a mix of staff and student reps. The President outlined that they hope to get other students involved once a volunteer role remit has been produced.

SECTION C: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Taken on 23 April online

10. STRATEGY PERFORMANCE REPORT

CEC 04/22/10

- 10.1 The CEC thanked the Head of Strategy and Insights for putting the report together. They were impressed with the vast progress staff and student reps have made during such a difficult and turbulent period.
- 10.2 The Head of Strategy and Insights asked the CEC what they would like to flag to the Trustees at their meeting. Flagged items included:
- Over 100 nominations for the Tutor Awards, of which 50% are interested in learning more about the Association
 - The successful delivery of a lot of the strategy projects and the work going on in the background to be more transparent about the Association's achievements
 - Decreasing number of students in active volunteer roles. Recommendation to conduct exit interviews to understand the reasons why students leave their roles and what could be done to help them stay active

11. STUDENT VOICE WEEK

CEC 04/22/11

- 11.1 Credit was given to the Head of Strategy and Insight and Student Voice Manager at the OU for their hard work in leading the production of Student Voice Week. Amazing efforts were put in from everyone who ran and attended sessions. VP Engagement outlined that there was greater engagement this time round and also a greater variety of sessions.
- 11.2 There were however some difficulties encountered too. These included, making the registration process more simple, with communications to do with registration more consistent and timely; putting out more communications to explain why students should engage with the sessions; running the week at a better time of year as students often experience engagement fatigue around September/October due to Freshers, Black History Month etc and finally, actually decreasing the number of sessions to improve the quality of them.

12. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

CEC 04/22/12

- 12.1 VP Engagement introduced this paper and presented some of the feedback gained through the survey.
- 12.2 With regards to Elections, there was a shift in responses from 2020 to 2021, with an increase in students saying 'they're not sure they will vote in the elections'. The CEC suggested ways to improve this going forward such as giving students more benefits

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to voting, putting a face and personality to the post holder to try make the communications more engaging and lastly, creating a Hoot article to encourage voting.

- 12.3 CEC awareness was discussed next. The survey outlined that only 3.6% of students know who the CEC are and what they do, with 33% of students knowing of the Students Association. The CEC focused on what steps can be taken to improve student awareness and improve visibility. The STEM FAR explained that being accountable is vital for transparency and that the Association needs to show how it makes a difference to the lives of students. Other suggestions included being more visible on social media, have regular 'meet your reps' sessions, not just at Student Voice Week and finally, having bitesize information and content to engage new students.
- 12.4 There was great feedback from students in relation to events and future ones. The most popular future events amongst students were study and course related ones, with the third most popular being ones relating to careers advice and employability. VP Community raised concern over current events as they are too focused on a social element and instead need to be study-related. There was a further suggestion to work alongside the faculties to try come up with some joint course-related events.
- 12.5 **ACTION:** The Head of EDI & Student Welfare to check in with Jiten Patel regarding a language check on this document.
- 12.6 The Open and Access FAR explained that the use of the term 'equity' makes a huge difference to her as it also incorporates accessibility and inclusivity. She further outlined that she is not supportive of having lots of strategies but does think this EDI one should be termed a strategy as a strategy implies no end, and the need for constant improvement in a particular area.

13. CONFERENCE EVALUATION

04/22/13

- 13.1 The CEC recognised the tremendous efforts of everyone involved in Conference. However, they also outlined the poor attendance of only 170 delegates and 40 guests. The CEC then discussed where they thought it went wrong and what could have been done to improve number of attendees.
- 13.2 The AAR Europe explained that lots of students had issues receiving the emails via MailChimp as they often ended up in Spam or Junk folders. The other issue discussed was the fact that online sessions can be very demotivating and less appealing and engaging as the communication element is made more difficult online. Others commented that it was the wrong time of year for Conference due to it being so close after Christmas, as well as being at the same time assignments were due. Some CEC members suggested that June/July time would be much better as this is when people have finished their modules.
- 13.3 The STEM FAR outlined that restricting the chat box resulted in students feeling disconnected and less engaged. She explained there is a need for a separate Conference chat area for students to socialise and get to know each other. One of the most important things that came out of the Conference discussion was listening to the students on what they would like to see and do at Conference. Some CEC members

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proposed that students should feed into the design of Conference before the Steering committee meet for their first meeting.

14. CLUBS REVIEW

04/22/14

- 14.1 The Head of Community gave a brief background to Clubs at the Association. She explained that the Community team offers a range of support to the clubs, but the difficulty is maintaining connection and engagement with them. The Projects Officer within this team conducted this Clubs review and undertook various research methods such as focus groups and surveys to get the feedback.
- 14.2 VP Community expressed that more support could be given to the Clubs and that there needs to be a sense of belonging in student community. She proposed the idea of sending a starter pack out to new clubs which would contain various information and guidance that they might need. The review also outlined that there needs to be more socials and more regular meet ups, particularly for club leads. Additionally, the review concluded that the Association can't accept similar clubs to ones that already exist as we want to avoid students being split over which to join.
- 14.3 The CEC praised the Community team for the very informative and insightful Clubs Review. They were in favour of all the recommendations and look forward to seeing the impact the review has had on current and future clubs.
- 14.4 RESOLUTION:** The CEC approved the recommendations.

15. ATHABASCA UPDATE

04/22/15

- 15.1 The Director of Engagement outlined that the Association is continuing to explore other opportunities with other organisations, following the success with Athabasca University. He was really pleased with the working relationship that is developing between the Association and Athabasca and the insight they provide into various aspects of a student union. He emphasised that the benefit is even greater as the cost is so minimal, but the reward is so high.
- 15.2 He asked CEC to approve a change to the review, increasing it from 6 months to yearly.
- 15.3 **RESOLUTION:** The CEC approved an increase to yearly review, rather than the 6 months that it is currently.

16. HOOT VOLUNTEER ROLE

04/22/16

- 16.1 VP Engagement and Digital Communications Officer presented this paper. They explained the need for a Hoot volunteer role, as previously staff used to write the articles for students, however creating content for the Hoot has become increasingly more popular amongst students. They recognised that a lot of training and staff support is required to support students writing an article but that it would have some really positive impacts.

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- 16.2 They outlined that the role would be a flexible one with no time commitment and the volunteer could work the role around their current commitments and schedules. The Volunteering and Representation team helped in the creation of the role description.
- 16.3 The CEC welcomed the idea of the role but did have a few reservations. The FBL FAR stated that there needs to be a review after 6 months and that the student volunteer must follow Association style guidelines. The AAR Europe expressed a need for the training for the successful candidate, to be spread out so they are not overwhelmed with various courses and trainings to undertake. Another recommendation was for the role description to highlight the benefits more, to try appeal to a wider audience.
- 16.4 Despite a few reservations highlighted by some CEC members, the CEC were excited to advertise a new volunteer role and hopefully give a student with an interest in writing and journalism, a great opportunity to improve their skill set and gain some experience. They recognised the value of this role and likewise noted that it will help ease with staff workload.
- 16.5 RESOLUTION:** The CEC approved the Hoot volunteer role.

17. FRESHERS FORTNIGHT

04/22/17

- 17.1 The Projects Officer (Student Community) conducted a review on the 21J and 22B Freshers. There was a large amount of sessions in both Freshers, with an average number of 56 attendees during 21J and 28 attendees during 22B. Online competitions ran throughout, and there were digital freebies to every attendee. The Projects Officer brought this review to the CEC to gain feedback on what they think requires improvement and what works well.
- 17.2 Areas for improvement that were discussed at the meeting are outlined below:
- Increasing the accessibility and inclusivity of sessions
 - Increasing the security of the sessions and making them safer
 - Introducing a comms plan so Freshers can be advertised earlier and in better ways
 - Seeking help from the OU to share details of Freshers in other spaces such as module forums
- 17.3 The AAR for Continental Europe expressed that whilst Freshers is a familiar term to students, less than 0.05% of international students attend Freshers events. Therefore, she proposed for sessions that are aimed at international students to be done on a different time zone, to help increase participation.
- 17.4 VP Engagement outlined that the support for session leads was exceptional and asked for this to continue.
- 17.5 The CEC commended the Projects Officer for her hard work conducting this review and running Freshers. VP Community stated that it wouldn't have been as successful without her.

SECTION D: ITEMS TO NOTE

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

18.1 Attendance to Societies Committee Meetings

The FBL FAR commented on the lack of attendees at the recent Society Committee Meetings. It was confirmed that 7 societies attended and apologies were sent by those who couldn't make it. VP Community said she would check the bye-laws to see if societies have to send a rep to the meeting. VP Admin confirmed it is not a requirement.

The FBL FAR recognised that the Committee meeting could have clashed with another meeting that was on the same day which could have consequently affected attendance.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

18.1 The next meeting of the Central Executive Committee will take place over the weekend of the 15 – 17 July 2022.

Action Log		
Item in the Minutes	Action	Action holder
12.5	The Head of EDI & Student Welfare to check in with Jiten Patel regarding a language check on this document.	Verity Robinson