



**STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)  
10 – 12 February 2023**

**MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Student Leadership Team (SLT) held via the Teams space from 3 February – 10 February 2023 and in person on the 11 February 2023.

**PRESENT**

Margaret Greenaway – President (Chair)  
Gareth Jones – Deputy President  
Natalie Baker – Vice President Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)  
Michael Bryan – Vice President Administration  
Nichola Connolly – Faculty Representative for Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS)  
Cazz Flowers – Vice President Community  
Laura Marulanda-Carter – Vice President Education  
Kaz Murphy – Faculty Representative for Open & Access  
Nigel Patterson – Faculty Representative for Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM)  
Lou Robinson – Vice President Engagement  
Elizabeth Scully – England Representative

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Gabriella Cull – Head of Executive Support & Staff Welfare (minutes)  
Magda Hadrys – Head of Operations (currently on mat leave)  
Ciara Linehan – Media and Admin Assistant  
Alison Lunn – Head of Finance and Resources (morning only)  
Beth Metcalf – Chief Executive  
Tom Mitchell – Projects Officer (Student Support and Welfare)  
Dan Moloney – Chief Operating Officer  
Verity Robinson – Head of EDI & Student Welfare (first item only)  
Samantha Smeraglia – Executive Support Assistant (live tweeting)  
Leanne Quainton – Head of Executive Support & Staff Welfare (morning only)  
Amy Undrell – Head of Strategy and Insight (afternoon only)

## INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

### A. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

The President welcomed the SLT to their first in person meeting of their terms. She gave a special welcome to the newly elected SLT members and also to the staff members who were observing the newly formatted SLT meeting.

### B. ABSENCES

Mohai Eddine Hadit - International Representative  
Stephen Hughes – Ireland Representative (apologies received)  
Ben Mansell – Faculty Representative for Business and Law  
Paul Reid – Scotland Representative (apologies received)  
Raed Townsend – Wales Representative  
Kara Dique – Student Member of Council  
Tommy Rowlands - Faculty Representative for Arts and Social Sciences (apologies received)

### C. MINUTES

C.1 The minutes from the meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2022 were approved via the Teams space.

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

D.1 None raised.

## SECTION A: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Taken on the Forum Meeting between 3 February – 10 February 2023

1. **RECEIVED: REPORT OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES** **SLT 02/23/1**
  - 1.1 The SLT received the report of affiliated societies.
2. **RECEIVED: EDI & STUDENT WELFARE UPDATE** **SLT 02/23/2**
  - 2.1 The SLT commended the DSG and OU Pride for producing such comprehensive and informative reports. They were pleased to see such positive work going on during trying times. They offered their support to the groups on any projects or work they may need help with. VP EDI will continue to support the groups and will keep the SLT updated on where they can get involved.

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**3. RECEIVED: REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** **SLT 02/23/3**

3.1 The SLT received the Report of the Board of Trustees.

**4. RECEIVED: STRATEGY PERFORMANCE REPORT** **SLT 02/23/4**

4.1 The SLT received the Report of the Board of Trustees.

**SECTION B: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Taken at the meeting on Saturday 29 October 2022

**5. ADOPTION OF PRIORITY AREAS AND FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION**

5.1 The Chief Operating Officer presented some slides and facilitated the discussion surrounding each priority area, specifically focusing on:

- Achievements
- Steering Team updates
- Next steps
- Opportunities and Challenges

5.2 The first priority area to be discussed was **EDI and Accessibility**. This focuses on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within the Association and alleviating barriers in accessing University services and support. Achievements made in this area so far include:

- Successfully lobbied the OU to increase the amount of funding in the hardship fund and relax criteria for those who can access it
- Engaged with Holocaust Education Trust to better understand antisemitism and raise awareness
- Members of the groups were invited to attend quarterly SLT meetings
- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary focus each month on diversity and inclusion of different groups
- Lobbied the OU regarding the provision of alternative formats

5.3 The Head of EDI and Student Welfare gave an update from the steering group which concluded the steering group's priorities. The steering group will prioritise Mental Health and Loneliness and Cost of Living to begin with, particularly as there is little support available from the OU and the Association with regard to loneliness. The group is hoping to do something in conjunction with Loneliness Awareness Week which is being held over the weekend of Monday 12 June – Friday 16 June 2023.

5.4 In terms of next steps, the group will first be looking at what is available from the OU, the Association and via external services to see where there are gaps in support for particular areas. The Projects Officer (Student Support and Welfare) will start work on University Mental Health week, which has since been pushed back due to strikes. The group will also look at how better to connect with the Student Support Team (SST) and the Disability Support Team (DST) so the EDI and Student Welfare team will have to

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do less signposting to students as they will be more aware of when to contact the OU's Support Team in the first instance.

- 5.5 Discussions were lengthy surrounding the delays in receiving alternative formats and the impact it has on the time students then have to complete their assignments. This issue was of high importance to all members of the SLT so a deliverable was created to lobby the University for a policy on deadline extensions for those who receive alternative format module materials.
- 5.6 **ACTION:** The Chief Operating Officer will call out on Teams for expressions of interest to meet and discuss what the Association is asking the University for and how this is put in place.
- 5.7 Following a meeting with the OU in Wales, the Deputy President made the SLT aware of a funding grant given to the OU in Wales called the 'wellbeing and health additional financial support'. He outlined that providing a proposal is given on what we would spend some money on, the Association could get access to some funding. Ideas of what the Association could do with the funding included, buying students TOTUM cards which would benefit them due to the cost of living crisis we see currently and there were also suggestions of using the money to fund the individual representation service for longer. There are further Terms and Conditions regarding access to this funding though so discussions on this are to be continued.
- 5.8 **Association Awareness** was the next priority area discussed. The aim of this priority area is to increase the awareness of the Association, its services, and opportunities through timely and relevant communications. Achievements made in this area so far are:
- Highest ever by-election turnout with the best ever engagement with more candidates than ever
  - Increased transparency of SLT work and areas of focus through introduction of priority areas and new reporting process
  - Live tweeting SLT meetings to enable students to be aware of conversations and decisions
  - Changed name from CEC to SLT to help students better understand what student leaders do
  - Represented OU students to external stakeholders
  - Deputy President, VP EDI and the FASS rep delivered an awareness session for ALs on Association services related to mental health and wellbeing
- 5.9 In the Steering group lead's absence (Head of Digi Comms), VP Engagement provided an update from the steering group. She highlighted the struggle in getting everyone together at the same time and so they have only met once so far. However, the outcomes from this first meeting were really positive and included actions such as getting a Wikipedia page set up, improving the Comms skills of the SLT through workshops and sessions, setting up of the Tutor Awards and advertising the Association through different groups which can then create greater awareness within the OU. The Environment and Sustainability Working Group is an example of this.

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- 5.10 In terms of actions for this steering group, they will be prioritising the awareness of the SLT and the work they do. Due to numerous recent resignations, it is more important than ever to help candidates better understand the role they are applying for. The group will be trying to raise awareness through multiple ways including; not using acronyms in content, using clubs and societies to help spread the message and working with the OU to include Association leaflets in mass mailings to students.
- 5.11 There was in depth discussions surrounding how awareness of the Association could be spread through tutors, associate lecturers and tutorial events. VP Community first outlined that we should be utilising tutors more and that information should be included in the first welcome email to students. VP Admin was very supportive of this idea and suggested a template should be drafted of an 'introductory message to the Students Association' which could then be shared out via first Tutor emails.
- 5.12 **ACTION:** VP Admin and VP Engagement to draft an introductory message which could be shared with Tutors to then send out in their emails.
- 5.13 There were also talks of an Association video being shared in online tutorials, an Association branded pop up shop set up in student events and a powerpoint slide being shared during initial module tutorials.
- 5.14 The Head of Operations (currently on mat leave) made SLT and staff aware of the Knowledge Management Service (KMS) which contains out of date information about the Association, but that once updated it could be a useful bridge of Association awareness between ourselves and the OU. The Deputy President suggested that the steering group could propose updates to this page on the KMS.
- 5.15 It was clear that the SLT were very passionate and wanted to prioritise building awareness of the Association through tutorials, lecturers, tutors, module forums etc. Therefore, expressions of interest to take this one forward will be collated.
- 5.16 **ACTION:** The Chief Operating Officer to call for expressions of interest to meet and agree what type of content we should be developing to share with students at the beginning of their study, and how we can get the University to mandate the inclusion of Association content in module delivery.  
**ACTION:** KMS data to be updated by Digital Communications team and others to ensure up to date.
- 5.17 Following this discussion and the one they had at their steering group meeting before Christmas, the group have set out their next steps:
- Update Association leaflet with a working QR code which will direct students to our website
  - Investigate how to engage students who access exam papers and create awareness through them
  - Update the Association's page on the KMS
  - Create a Wikipedia page on the Association
  - Investigate how to increase awareness through the clubs and societies

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- 5.18 The third priority area discussed was **Communities and Engagement**. The aim of this area is to enhance the student experience by creating more spaces for students to engage with each other. Achievements made in this area so far include:
- Highest ever registrations for Association Student Voice Week sessions and record attendance
  - Delivered a face to face Freshers event in Milton Keynes in October 2022 and also in some of the nations
  - Launch of the Environment & Sustainability Working Group and recruitment of 6 volunteers to sit on the group
  - Presented the Tutor Awards to OU Students
  - Highest ever engagement with the Annual Membership Survey (AMS)
  - Increased awareness of available Association grants to support member initiatives and grow participation at events
  - STEM faculty rep set up an MSc Maths Colloquium Programme where a Maths MSc student leads a presentation on an interesting topic followed by a Q&A to interested STEM students
- 5.19 The Head of Finance gave the steering group update, illustrating that their primary focus was going to be creating geography-based community opportunities. She outlined that the group had discussed creating opportunities within the clubs and societies to develop skills such as offering the chance to be a secretary on a society, which would increase engagement within the Association whilst also providing students with the opportunity to improve their skill set.
- 5.20 VP Community sought SLT's views on the Student Chat Platform and its relevant paper that had been shared on Teams by the project lead, Director of Membership Services. This paper proposed three options in relation to the Student Chat Platform project:
1. Continue with the launch of the platform as planned, to all students in spring/summer 2023
  2. Scale back the scope of the pilot, introduce it to smaller, targeted cohorts of students and scale up as resource allows. Aim to secure future funding whilst pilot ongoing
  3. Stop the pilot now
- 5.21 A lot of the SLT were in favour of the app, explaining that they have heard from other students of how uninviting and outdated the forums are, emphasising the need for a new chat platform. Some members of the SLT were keen for a pilot to take place and then decide how to proceed with the app following this.
- 5.22 The Chief Executive and Director of Membership Services discussed the financial implications of options 1 and 2, recognising that if this was to roll out, something else would have to be dropped in order to get enough resourcing to facilitate the roll out of the app.
- 5.23 **RESOLUTION:** The SLT voted on which option they would like to go ahead with. The votes received are set out as follows:  
Option 1 – 3 votes

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Option 2 – 9 votes

Option 3 – 0 votes

For those who were not present at the meeting, they will have the opportunity to vote via the Teams space so the final votes can be collated.

- 5.24 **ACTION:** VP Community to collate final votes via Teams from the members of the SLT who were absent from the meeting.
- 5.25 VP Community then wanted to gauge opinions on Conference which led to a good discussion. The overriding conclusion from the discussion was that it cannot continue how it has been done in the past, with it being a fully paid for event for only 500 students. The SLT highlighted the need to put on a Conference that benefits the majority, not the minority, for a smaller amount of money. There were suggestions to take Conference to the nations, to benefit a greater number of students.
- 5.26 **ACTION & RESOLUTION:** Remaining discussions on Conference to be taken to Microsoft Teams and VP Community to pick up feedback this way.
- 5.27 The final priority area to be discussed was **Representation**. This area aims to increase the influence of student views and experiences at all levels of the University and beyond. Achievements made in this area within the last quarter include:
- TEF submission to the OfS on behalf of OU students
  - Obtained commitment from the OU to include a student representative on interview panels for recruitment of staff in senior positions
  - Introduced formal system for OU to request student involvement in projects and meetings
  - Representing students' views during industrial action and communicating implications
  - Representing students' interests in discussions around the OU's financial and business planning
- 5.28 VP Education provided a brief update from the Steering Group. She highlighted the success of the non-governance panel as it has helped prevent some student reps from feeling overwhelmed and stressed out. Furthermore, she emphasised the importance of not calling upon the same groups of volunteers and that they need to be gathered from a variety of spaces. The Deputy President reinforced the need to look in depth of where volunteers are being allocated and how often.
- 5.29 The Chief Executive stated a need to gather feedback from reps regarding the meetings they sit on and whether they are beneficial or not. If they are not, she explained attendance to these meetings should be halted. Discussions surrounding Senate Reference Group (SRG) then followed, feedback led to a clear need to review the current status and purpose for SRG. VP Education asked for feedback on SRG to be sent her way for evaluation.
- 5.30 **ACTION:** Feedback on Senate Reference Group meetings to be sent to VP Education.

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5.31 **RESOLUTION:** The SLT unanimously voted in favour of a review of SRG.

## **6. STUDENT FACING ISSUES**

**SLT 02/23/6**

- 6.1 The Deputy President first introduced a new 'student issues' reporting tool which is currently being developed. He emphasised the need to have a mechanism on the website where students can input issues they are facing and as a result, the Senior Digital Communications Officer has been working hard in the background to create this mechanism. Students will be able to publicly share their issue, as well as vote other comments up and down. The idea is that the top three most voted comments will be discussed at the next SLT meeting. The Deputy President asked for the SLT to signpost students who are facing an issue, to this webpage to comment there. The Chief Operating Officer emphasised that it is not the responsibility of the SLT to get involved in 'casework' type issues and that this mechanism is the protection against being drawn into casework. Comments will also be moderated/approved by the Head of Executive Support and Staff Welfare to ensure it remains a safe space for students to share issues and ideas.
- 6.2 The SLT received information on this reporting tool positively. They were particularly excited about the prospect of being able to close the loop with issues students are facing and acknowledged that the output of this will be really encouraging.
- 6.3 The President then opened the floor for members of SLT to raise any pressing issues they are aware of. The Deputy President gave an update on the ongoing alternative formats issue. He has recently received a presentation from PVC-Students on this and the outcome of the presentation was that the OU have now done as much as they can and can't do anything further to improve the issue, a further joint statement will be released soon but at the moment this presentation is confidential.
- 6.4 The STEM rep queried the support available for Students in Secure Environments (SiSE). He was made aware by the Chief Executive that library study volunteers assist with searching for relevant resources for these students and that they have a limited number of courses to choose from as a result. Due to the lack of information surrounding SiSE, the Chief Executive suggested having a member of OU Staff who works in this area to come talk to the SLT and raise greater awareness of SiSE.
- 6.5 **ACTION:** The Chief Executive to look into getting a speaker from SiSE to talk at an upcoming meeting.
- 6.6 Finally, SRG expenses were raised as another issue facing students. Context behind this issue is that the current agreement with the OU is that the online vs campus meetings for Senate Reference Group will mirror the arrangements of Senate (currently 50:50). However, after some changes to OU finance systems, the OU's Governance Team are no longer able to offer advances to students attending campus for meetings. This is a problem for students unable to meet the upfront costs of travel and accommodation. This was raised with the OU in summer 2022 and large amounts of resource have gone into pursuing this, but has still not been resolved. However, the Association has committed to covering expenses for advances in the 2022-23 term should no solution be found.



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## **7. HLM OVERVIEW**

- 7.1 The Deputy President updated the SLT, particularly the newer members of SLT on the process of awarding Honorary Life Members and putting a proposal together. This was to give them greater awareness, should any nominations come forward in the foreseeable.

## **8. STUDENT CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The Head of Strategy and Insight gave a briefing to the SLT on the upcoming student consultations and what to expect when delivering the presentations. This was gratefully received.

<b>SECTION D: ITEMS TO NOTE</b>
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## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### Tutor Awards 2023

- 9.1 The Deputy President and VP Engagement outlined that the Tutor Awards for 2023 had been launched and that the link for nominations is now live until mid June. Promotion has begun for the event this week and the SLT were encouraged to share in their spaces and on their social media to generate even more engagement than last year.

### 9.2 Secret Lives of Students

The Faculty Rep for WELS queried if we had representation at Wonke's upcoming event, the Secret Lives of Students.

- 9.3 **ACTION:** The Chief Operating Officer to investigate Wonke's event and the costs of sending a member of the SLT there.

- 9.4 **ACTION:** The Director of Membership Services to pull together a spreadsheet of upcoming get togethers and events so there can be a clear oversight of who is going where and when.

### 9.5 Appointments Committee

VP Education outlined a vacancy within the Appointments Committee as SLT rep. She therefore asked for any nominations to be sent by Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February and then a vote will follow on who should be allocated this role.

## **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

- 8.1 The next meeting will take place face to face over the weekend of the 22- 24 April 2023.

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<b>Action Log</b>		
<b>Item in the Minutes</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Action holder</b>
5.6	The Chief Operating Officer will call out on Teams for expressions of interest to meet and discuss what the Association is asking the University for and how this is put in place.	Dan Moloney
5.12	VP Admin and VP Engagement to draft an introductory message which could be shared with Tutors to then send out in their emails.	Michael Bryan & Lou Robinson
5.16	The Chief Operating Officer to call for expressions of interest to meet and agree what type of content we should be developing to share with students at the beginning of their study, and how we can get the University to mandate the inclusion of Association content in module delivery. KMS changes to be implemented.	Dan Moloney/Kate Dungate
5.24	VP Community to collate final votes via Teams from the members of the SLT who were absent from the meeting.	Cazz Flowers
5.26	Remaining discussions on Conference to be taken to Microsoft Teams and VP Community to pick up feedback this way	All members of SLT & Cazz Flowers
5.30	Feedback on Senate Reference Group meetings to be sent to VP Education	Laura Marulanda-Carter
6.5	The Chief Executive to look into getting a speaker from SiSE to talk at an upcoming meeting	Beth Metcalf
9.3	The Chief Operating Officer to investigate Wonke's event and the costs of sending a member of the SLT there	Dan Moloney
9.4	The Director of Membership Services to pull together a spreadsheet of upcoming get togethers and events so there can be a clear oversight of who is going where and when	Jess Smith