



OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Student Leadership Team (SLT)

26 – 28 April 2024

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & 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 We are happy to report that we have made some great progress in some of our renewed priority areas, though frustratingly there are some others that have progressed slower than we hoped.

- 2.2 Building on the success with the first EDI Newsletter, we shared the second one in March, sending this out to Group Members and publishing on our website. Of the emails to the Groups, the opening rates are:
- DSG - 52% open rate, sent to 936 members
 - OU Pride – 46% open rate, sent to 642 members
 - Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group – 47% open rate, sent to 187 members
- 2.3 The Accessibility training with AbilityNet has begun its roll out across the staff team. Staff have completed two of the three sessions and this has given the Accessibility Standards Working Group a lot of food for thought and intend to keep momentum going in this area.
- 2.4 Despite reaching out to a number of Conference organisers with the hope of presenting our work to a wider audience but we have been unsuccessful in securing a spot so far. However, we are still waiting to hear back from a few more so watch this space!
- 2.5 Since our last report we have launched both the interim [Freedom of Speech Code of Practice](#) and the [Trans and Gender-Diverse Inclusion Policy](#).
- 2.6 We have now held two focus groups for Neuro-Divergent students and will be sharing a survey to continue gathering feedback on their support requirements. Once the feedback has been analysed we will be creating an action plan ready to begin work with the new SLT.

3. Completed or Planned EDI Work

- 3.1 The Individual Representation Service continues to support more students and increase its awareness. March was a record month with cases increasing over 200% on March 2023 (36 cases in total compared to 11 last year). April looks to continue this trend with 11 cases already received (compared to a total of 7 for the month last year).
- 3.2 Even though we hit 500 Library Study Volunteer requests before Christmas, we have now this week hit 600 requests so these are still flying in!
- 3.3 We have already begun work on the next edition of the Hoot for SiSE, scheduled to be sent out in June. Following this we will be running our second Membership Survey for SiSE (we completed one in the summer of 2022) to see whether engagement has grown.
- 3.4 Unfortunately we are still seeing a lot of turnover in Group Committee positions and have now run co-options this year for OU Pride and BAME, with a DSG Co-

option about to launch. Happily the OU Pride co-option was successful and currently all positions are filled!

- 3.5 Single Sign On is still causing issues for Aluminare and so the launch to Groups is still stalled.
- 3.6 As mentioned in the above section the Accessibility Standards Working Group have been working through arising issues the AbilityNet training has made us aware of and we are creating an action plan that we hope to share soon.
- 3.8 We were delighted that our proposal to introduce a new Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Rep was accepted and that there is a candidate that has stood in the elections!

Verity Robinson

Head of EDI and Student Welfare

4. Groups Update

Below are the updates from the Groups. There is no update from the BAME Group as The Chair is currently running the Group solo.

REPORT FROM DISABLED STUDENTS GROUP

Committee Updates

The DSG have now held their first committee meeting where we discussed ways of working going forwards and shared ideas for events and guests for the drop in sessions.

As part of this our Communications Officer shared with us the patterns of contacts in March which we have had on both the forum and the Facebook group.

Key notes to take away are:

- Pinned posts have been tidied
- Facebook - 39 new threads
- Forum - 14 new threads
 - ¼ of these posts are social/chat
 - 18% Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Queries
 - 11% DSA/Equipment/Mentor Queries
 - 9% ND Support/Queries
 - 7% for each OU General Benefits and finance, DSG Posts
 - Others include exams, EMAs and TMAs
- The forum has had queries around ND Support, MH Wellbeing. Social chat and OUSA.

In response to some of the queries we have shared some information on mental health and wellbeing services and what's available, we have also study tips. The committee also discussed ideas how to drive engagement through the digital tools. Finally the committee discussed advertising for the vacant roles of Secretary and Events Officer.

Group Membership

There are currently 1010 members in the Group.

REPORT FROM OU PRIDE

1. Committee Updates

The OU Pride committee consists of 3 members, Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary.

We have just gone through a co-option and hope to meet the new Events and Communications Officer soon.

We have also had the following committee meetings:

Wednesday 31st January – committee meeting

Wednesday 21st February – committee meeting

2. Group Membership

We currently have **661** members registered via OUStudents.com.

This number is an increase of **19** since December.

We continue to engage with 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 898 members on our closed Facebook group, this is an increase of 12 on last quarter.

Of these members, 402 were active members between 1st January 2024 and 31st March 2024.

Active members ⓘ

1 Jan 2024 - 31 Mar 2024



The most popular posts relate to Transgender Day of Visibility and an event being run in Scotland

For any of our Scottish members



And a giggle is always good



4. Events & Activities

We ran our usual Come and Chat event on Friday 26th January

On Friday 2nd February we hosted a Freshers event

For this Lyndsay and Steve ran an LGBTQ+ themed quiz with lots of laughter. The event was well attended, and we got a flurry of membership requests following the event!

Also on Friday 2nd Lyndsay had a catch up with Verity Robinson to talk about how things were in general for OUPride and how the Student Association could support us. We were able to talk through a few ideas and put plans in place for these.

On the 27th of February Steve and Lyndsay met with Arlene Hunter on the first of the quarterly OUPride/ SSS Director meetings. Steve and Lyndsay felt it went really well with actions taken on both sides to improve the situation for our students, such as training, signposting and awareness.

On the 1st of March Lyndsay met with Rachel Ishmael from the Student Association to start the co-option process. The nomination process closed on Friday 5th March so hopefully we will see results shortly. The hope is to get 2 new members into the committee as soon as possible.

On the 14th of March Lyndsay and Steve, along with Verity Robinson and Natalie Baker, met with Dave Hall to discuss the outcome of the employment tribunal. Lyndsay and Steve were able to put forward the general feeling from the OUPride membership and offered some solutions to ease the current situation. We do feel the meeting accomplished what it set out to do and we hope to see some action in the near future.

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

February was LGBT history month.

This year's theme was 'medicine'. We shared a link to Stonewalls history hub where there are lots of resources.

A few of our members also shared interesting articles.

31st March was International Transgender Day of Visibility

We asked 2 of our members to write about what life is like for them as transgender people and we were so proud of what they wrote. The articles were so heartfelt and honest.

6th April was International Asexuality Day

We shared what asexual means.

5. Student issues & challenges

There have been no issues this quarter.

6. Any other initiatives or updates

A few members have been asking about other social media platforms so we have put it out for a vote which is due to close imminently.

Lyndsay Thomson

Chair

For and on behalf of OU PRIDE