



OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Student Leadership Team (SLT)

12 – 14 July 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 There's some great progress being made with our priority area at the moment that I'm very pleased to share with you all.

- 2.2 Continuing to build on the success of the EDI Newsletter, we shared the third installation in June, sending this out to Group Members and publishing on our website. Of the emails to the Groups, the opening rates are:
- DSG - 45% open rate, sent to 970 members
 - OU Pride – 44% open rate, sent to 642 members
 - Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group – 44% open rate, sent to 195 members
- 2.3 The Accessibility Standards Working Group have created an Accessibility Action plan to work through, keeping Accessibility at the heart of our activities. We are just putting deadlines on the actions and then we will be ready to share it.
- 2.4 We're very excited to share that we've been selected to present at the RAISE 2024 Conference in September. Although this is technically outside of the current SLT's term – we're still taking it as a win! I, along with Sammi Wright, will be presenting on the work we do for our Students in Secure Environments.
- 2.5 We have been working on a Trans Inclusion Action Plan that is set to be worked on over 2024-26 and is in the final draft stages. We hope to share this very soon and think it will go a long way to show our support and commitment to these students.
- 2.6 The survey for Neurodivergent Students will be shared week commencing 1st July and an action plan will be created from the data gathered.

3. Completed or Planned EDI Work

- 3.1 The Individual Representation Service continues to support more students and increase its awareness. As a team we have decided to focus our awareness raising on Central Disciplinary Cases for the next academic year as these cases can have enormous impacts on students.
- 3.2 Library Study Volunteer requests have slowed down as they always do for the second half of the academic year. We are currently on 626 requests and are concentrating now on recruitment for volunteers that will start for the new academic year.
- 3.3 Single Sign On has finally been activated for Aluminare so we will soon be promoting it to Group members as an alternative social space than forums.
- 3.4 Our team are starting to prepare for Group Committee appointments and although these do not start until September as all three take place at once we need to be organised and give ourselves the best chance to fill the roles.
- 3.5 Likewise, with Conference voting that there will be 3 new EDI Representatives on the SLT, we will be looking at targeted communications to ensure the roles are seen by as many students as possible.

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 BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC STUDENTS GROUP

Committee Updates

Regrettably, since mid-February 2024, the progress of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) committee has stalled. This has been because of the lack of members within the committee itself. With the help of the senior EDI team, numerous attempts have been made to recruit and fill positions such as those of the Vice-Chair, the Secretary, the Communications Officer and the Events Officer. However, due to commitment issues, the selected committee members have failed to complete the subsequent onboarding processes after the conclusion of the initial recruitment phase.

In the meantime, I have been in touch with both the Careers and Employability Services (CES) team and Isabelle Hoyet, the International Area Representative to discuss about employment prospects across the European Union and beyond, as there appears to be a dearth of such opportunities mentioned on the OpportunityHub platform. Given that the university is widely regarded as international, it is deeply concerning to note the absence of statistics regarding job procurement by our OU Graduates residing outside the United Kingdom (i.e. EU & beyond) within the Employer Engagement Reports shared on a monthly basis by various OU CES's Employer Engagement Coordinators. This is something that I intend to change in due time.

Furthermore, I have been reassured by Verity Robinson, the EDI Head and Natalie Baker that the situation is bound to improve once the BAME SLT Representative begins their term from August onwards. I look forward to working with them and collectively, we will try to ensure that we make sufficient progress for our student populace so that they are able to reap the benefits of this group's existence.

Group Membership

There are currently 213 members in the Group.

REPORT FROM DISABLED STUDENTS GROUP

The DSG has now completed our recruitment drive and we now have our secretary and events leads to work alongside us. I would love to welcome them to the team and over the next couple of weeks they will be active within the DSG.

Two months ago we hosted a special drop in session to welcome the director of Diverse Learners to help with her wealth of knowledge on the benefit system, and academic preparation for neurodiverse colleagues. The session ran for over an hour with many questions and energetic discussions.

We can say that there have been some fantastic supportive discussions on both social media outputs, special thank you to Felicity our Communications lead for managing these.

- 46 threads on Facebook,
- 21 on the forums.

For Facebook:

- 22% DSA/equipment/mentor queries,
- 15% social chat,
- 13% MH/wellbeing support/queries,
- 11% exams/EMAs/TMAs/extensions and disability support/queries and ND support/queries,
- 7% DSG, also reasonable adjustments for study, general OU discussion, OUSA and deferral/leaving

For the forums:

- 29% disability support/queries,
- 19% MH/wellbeing support/queries,
- 19% ND support/queries,
- 14% social chat,

- 10% DSG, also DSA/equipment/mentor queries and exams/EMAs/TMAs/extensions

We have continued to encourage use of the Facebook group and forums, and still tidying up in some ways.

We also have had a number of questions regards turning in, editing and some of the problems with EMA's through the drop in session recently.

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 . There have also been a lot of discussions regards the software for audio transcription i.e. Dragon.

REPORT FROM OU PRIDE

1. Committee Updates

The OU Pride committee consists of 4 members, Chair, Vice-Chair, Communications officer and Events officer.

We have just gone through a co-option event and have co-opted on our Communications officer and our Events officer. Unfortunately for personal reasons our Secretary has resigned from the committee. We wish to publicly thank her for her hard work and dedication throughout her time with us.

We have also had the following committee meetings:

Wednesday 10th April – committee meeting, planning for the coming months

Wednesday 8th May – welcome session for the new committee members

Thursday 23rd May – committee meeting with the full new committee

2. Group Membership

We currently have 684 members registered via OUStudents.com.
This number is an increase of 7 since April.

The rate of increase has slowed down, however this is expected at this time in the academic calendar as students are busy preparing for exams and EMAs.

3. Communications

We currently have 903 members on our closed Facebook group, this is an increase of 5 on last quarter.

As you can see from above, we hit over 900 members during this quarter. To mark this, we ran a contest to celebrate our community and membership. The contest, in which the first 50 people to email the OU Pride group email with a message titled '900 Competition' received a Pride pin badge, along with some pride stickers.

We received 22 entries in the first hour, demonstrating how well engaged our Facebook community has become. We're proud to have grown this network over time, and to be able to celebrate our members, who were delighted with their prizes.

To celebrate reaching 900 members in our group, we're running a contest!!

The first fifty people to email oupride@open.ac.uk will win one of these cute badges, as well as some brilliant pride stickers to decorate your laptops, your bags or your fridges. We don't mind, so long as you're embracing your inner pride! 🏳️‍🌈

Here's the T's and C's - you'll need to email the inbox oupride@open.ac.uk with the subject '900 Competition' and the address you'd like the badge sent to in the body of the email.

To meet our obligations under the General Data Protection Regulations, once we have mailed your badges, we will not store your address details, and will delete the email.

Competition is open.... NOW!!



Of these 903 members, 625 were active members between 1st April 2024 and 22nd June 2024.



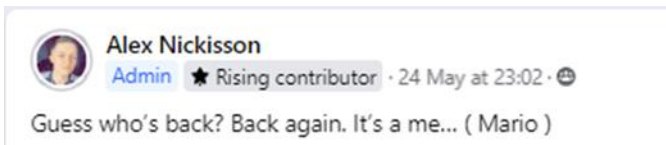
The most popular posts this quarter have been related to Pride month.



And our 900 competition above!

Our new committee officers have been introducing themselves

Hi everyone, I wanted to post something to introduce myself. I'm Scott and I am OU Pride's new Communications Officer.



4. Events & Activities

We ran our usual Come and Chat events on:

Friday 26th April

Friday 24th May

We have another one scheduled for Friday 28th June

The team also put together an article for the EDI newsletter which has just gone out.

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

Monday 22nd April to Sunday 28th April was Lesbian Visibility Week.

This year the main aim was education about where lesbians still do not have true equality. We shared a link to the Stonewall hub which then had links to the campaigns and educate pieces.

Friday 17th May was International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)

This year's theme was "No one left behind: Equality, Justice and Freedom for all". We

shared the message that we are stronger when we stand together and shared a link to may17.org for more information.

Sunday 19th May was Agender Pride Day

For this day we shared a post on what being agender actually means. We also found a helpful YouTube video that we shared to our membership. We asked our members to share how they are celebrating.

Friday 24th May was Pansexual and Panromantic Visibility Day

We shared what it means to be pansexual and/or panromantic. We shared the flag and some famous people who have recently come out as pan.

And of course, June is PRIDE month!

We have been sharing the dates of the individual pride marches across the country.

We are in the process of organising an online event to celebrate PRIDE month, which is happening on 6th July.

5. Student issues & challenges

There have been no issues this quarter.

6. Any other initiatives or updates

OU Pride WhatsApp Group

From mid-March, we held a two-week poll on the Forum and through our Facebook page to gauge interest for a WhatsApp Group for OU Pride students. The poll showed a clear majority in favour of this social channel being set up and so, after the committee agreed on a set of rules for the moderation of the group, on the 10th April, we issued a joining link for the new WhatsApp group chat.

The group is administered by the OU Pride Committee and has been established to act as a social space, as well as offering support and signposting. At date of writing, the group has 29 members, spanning the full LGBTQIA+ family, who are engaged, committed and passionate supporters of the community.

Friends have been made through the group, which has quickly become a useful forum to challenge loneliness and isolation, discuss ideas with our community, find out what they would like to see and to advertise events.

General Election

The country is in the grips of General Election fever. Although we normally make a point of steering clear of politics, we have been trying to encourage our members to pay

attention to what is going on. LGBTQ+ rights are prevalent in this year's election. We have been making it as easy as possible for our members to understand what each major party are saying in their manifestos regarding LGBTQ+ rights.

Steering Group

We are in the process of setting up a few steering groups of our most active members to look at engaging our members in bigger activities.

Lyndsay Thomson

Chair

For and on behalf of OU PRIDE