



**STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)  
12 – 14 July 2024**

**MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Student Leadership Team (SLT) held via the Teams space from 5 – 12 July 2024 and in person on the 13 July 2024.

**PRESENT**

Margaret Greenaway – President (Chair)  
Mark Walker – 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  
Isabelle Hoyet – International Representative  
Matt Porterfield – Student Member of Council  
Jack Flaherty – Faculty Representative for Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)  
Pauline Robinson – Faculty Representative for Business and Law  
Kelly Coker – Vice President Student Representation  
Lou Robinson – Vice President Engagement  
Nigel Patterson – Faculty Representative for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Gabriella Cull – Head of Executive Support & Staff Welfare (minutes)  
Beth Metcalf – Chief Executive  
Dan Moloney – Director of Engagement  
Verity Robinson – Head of EDI & Student Welfare  
Samantha Smeraglia – Executive Support Administrator (live tweeting)  
Jessica Smith – Associate Director: Projects & Services  
Gareth Jones – Volunteering and Representation Officer  
Allan Musinguzi – Head of Volunteering and Representation

## INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

### A. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

The President welcomed the SLT to the final SLT meeting of their terms. She thanked the SLT for their continued hard work and efforts over the past two years and wished them well on their next ventures.

### B. ABSENCES

Stephen Hughes – Ireland Representative (apologies received)  
Kaz Murphy – Open and Access Rep (apologies received)

### C. MINUTES

- C.1 The minutes from the meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2024 were approved via the Teams space.

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

- D.1 *Action 5.2.9: The Chief Executive will take the SLT recommendation back to the Trustees as the proposal supported in principle. The Conference vote will then provide Trustees with a steer as to whether students do, or do not want, a name change.*  
**CLOSED.** This was completed and it is now with the Trustees to determine when and how to start the process to change the name from OU Students Association to Open University Students Union (OPENSU).

*Action 5.2.15: The Chief Executive will lead work on the policy wording to present to students for option three (c). If supported it will then be a stance that we, as an Association, would take.* **CLOSED.** The policy was approved by the student body via a majority vote and it will be the incoming SLT who will take the work on this forward.

*Action 6.14: The Association Awareness project team to identify which modules should be covered and identify potential students to create them and then look in to the promotion of them.* **CLOSED.** Details of this were discussed under the priority area updates.

*Action 6.20: The President to check if the team are still looking into the issue and gathering information and if there are any areas they would like our support with e.g. access to student engagement on the issue.* **CLOSED.** Due to the change in Government, the ministers the Association had contact with have now resigned so new contacts will have to be made.

*Action 8.9: SLT student insights will be fed back to the elections team via the Chief Executive and Director of Engagement initially, with the opportunity for SLT to input further to the Elections process.* **CLOSED.** The Chief Executive thanked everyone who

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fed into discussions about the elections at the previous meeting. She confirmed that a full elections review is planned so this feedback, combined with consultations with the newly elected SLT will contribute to this review.

### **SECTION A: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

Taken on the Teams space between 5 July – 12 July 2024

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|----|---|--------------------|
| 1. | <b>RECEIVED: REPORT OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES</b>   | <b>SLT 07/24/1</b> |
| 2. | <b>RECEIVED: EDI &amp; STUDENT WELFARE UPDATE</b> | <b>SLT 07/24/2</b> |
| 3. | <b>RECEIVED: REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES</b>  | <b>SLT 07/24/3</b> |

### **SECTION B: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Taken at the meeting on Saturday 13 July 2024

#### **4. PRIORITY AREA UPDATES**

- 4.1 The President outlined that this will be the final updates on the priority areas that the group set back at the start of their terms, in 2022. She asked for conclusions from each of the priority sponsors on each one of the projects.
- 4.2 **EDI and Accessibility**
- 4.2.1 EDI Newsletter: **Completed.**
- 4.2.2 Assessment for ND students and Support for ND Students: **In progress.** A survey was created by the EDI Projects Officer, along with VP Engagement, VP EDI, (Kelly) and the Research and Engagement Strategy Officer, following the focus groups which commenced in March. The aim of the survey was to understand what support students need and how best to implement this in the Association's work. So far, 60 responses have been received and the survey is open until 31<sup>st</sup> July. Once the survey has closed, the data will be analysed and an action plan created.
- 4.2.3 Action Plan for General Accessibility Training: **Completed.**
- 4.2.4 Action Plan for Trans Students: **In progress.** A draft of a trans-inclusion statement has been written and the project sponsors will be meeting next Thursday to finalise it before it gets published.
- 4.2.5 Present at Conferences about EDI/distance-learning issues: **Completed.** The Head of EDI and Student Welfare and Projects Officer (Student Welfare) will be presenting at the RAISE conference in November about SISE students and the work of the Association in supporting students in secure environments.

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### 4.3 Association Awareness

- 4.3.1 Increase Association presence on Module Websites and OU Study App: **Completed.** An introduction to modules for all new students was shared on module sites and the OU study app.
- 4.3.2 Update 'Being an OU Student' OpenLearn Course and Add to Study Planner: **Completed.** The video on being an OU student was renewed and was shared on OU study app.
- 4.3.3 Grow the Hoot and introduce Module Reviews: **In progress.** With regards to growing the Hoot, VP Engagement outlined that the Hoot working group met a few months ago and have agreed on some new categories which will sit along the top banner and will be more suitable for the articles that are posted on the Hoot. These are due to be finished and applied by March 2025. She then made the SLT aware of a copyright issue whereby some images had been used in old articles without permission from the image owners. A new project has commenced whereby all images in articles will be checked to make sure they are safe to use. This is due to finish December 2024. The accessibility of images will also be explored to ensure alt text is added to all images within each article.
- 4.3.4 With regard to Introducing module reviews, the project sponsors have been looking into identifying which modules should be included. However, this project will be passed on to the incoming VP Community to take on, with an aim for it to be completed by Spring 2025.
- 4.3.5 Build Tutor Awards and Volunteer Recognition Events into Association Cyclical Calendar: **Completed.** The International Rep provided an update on this project, outlining first that Volunteering week was the first week in June and the Association celebrated this by putting on special drop in sessions, virtual activities, social media posts to raise awareness, as well as an article written for the newsletter. Building on engagement has also been a focus point for the group. Regular monthly drop ins have been held to gather ideas from volunteers about how to increase engagement amongst Association volunteers.
- 4.3.6 The Volunteer Recognition Event was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and was a successful celebratory evening, with 16% of volunteers attending. The next steps for the project sponsors are to conduct a feedback survey about the drop in sessions and run an evaluation of the recognition event by the end of the month.
- 4.3.7 The Tutor Awards 2024 saw a total of 155 nominations. Whilst the number of nominations is considerably lower compared to last year, the quality of the nominations was much better and more extensive in comparison to previous years. Four panels were set up and chaired by an SLT member to determine a winner and runner up for each faculty. The Board of Trustees have been notified of the outcomes and will sign off the chosen winners before it is announced more widely amongst the student body. The date for the Awards Ceremony still needs to be decided. We will need to decide whether we continue to use the Association website for nomination submissions or revert to the MS Form for future Tutor Awards.

#### 4.4 Representation

4.4.1 Make changes to Senate Reference Group: **Completed.**

4.4.2 Campaign on Student Finance: **In progress.** A manifesto had been worked on over the past few months however, due to the change in Government, the document has been made more broad. Work will continue with the OU's External Affairs team (GEA) and the Association will continue to liaise with the team to avoid confusion amongst MPs. Jazz Simpson, Policy and Representation Officer, is currently working on a letter to send to the relevant MPs.

4.4.3 Engage with students around the General Election: **Completed.** Back in February, a campaign on Voter ID was ran whereby videos were collected from students to encourage people to vote in the General Election and most importantly, to remember to bring a form of ID to the polling station. These videos were shared on social media to raise awareness. The Deputy President (and Project Sponsor) acknowledged that lots of work had been done and was ready go prior to the General Election being called.

4.4.4 Consult on changing the name to Union: **In progress.** Student consultations were fairly overwhelming in support of the name change. This resolution then received a majority vote at Conference to approve the name change. The initial plan is to trade as OpenSU but to still be legally known as the Students Association. The Director of Engagement confirmed that students will feed in to the consultation process which is currently being discussed with the Board of Trustees. Students will have the opportunity to get involved in things such as logo design and branding.

#### 4.5 Community and Engagement

4.5.1 Aluminate Chat Platform Development and Pilot: **In progress.** A soft-launch is due in July. Furthermore, after many months of frustration and complexities, single-sign on has finally been completed. The Groups have also been invited to trial the platform and it is due to go live to all students in September.

4.5.2 Isolation Awareness Month: **Completed.**

4.5.3 Community Events focussed on Faculty/School/Theme: **In progress.** The International Rep provided an update on this project. First, she outlined that more societies and clubs are sharing information about their events which is a good stepping stone to having greater awareness of the events that are run. With regard to increasing meet-up host numbers, 11 applications were received for new meet up hosts and due to the International Rep and FASS Rep continuing into the 2024-26 SLT, work on this will continue and they want it to be a priority.

4.5.4 Celebrate Long Standing Societies and Clubs: **In progress.** VP Administration outlined things the project sponsors want to do in relation to this project, and things they have achieved. First, they have; offered more grants to societies and clubs than ever before, collated all the accounts and have also contingency planned. For example, to prevent societies folding, they can actually join some societies together.

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Things they would like to do; spotlight society leadership, highlight societies' events and finally recognise great society leaders.

## **5. GROUP UPDATES**

- 5.1 The members of the Groups due to be attending the meeting didn't show, so there were no Group updates at this meeting.

## **6. STUDENT FACING ISSUES**

- 6.1 There were some outstanding actions from the February student issues discussion. These were in relation to; Reachability in case of problems and Online Tutorials and Day Schools. The SLT went through these first.

### **ACTIONS:** Reachability in case of problems

- *(7.4) To meet with Student Support to discuss student feedback and three items:
  - *The call back option to be made more widely available, so it is easier for students to find a way to contact the OU. Particularly for international students since they incur the most cost when contacting student support.*
  - *To explore alternative means of contacting student support and see if that can put into place*
  - *To discuss expanding student supporting opening hours, possibly via staggered shifts if budgets are a constraint.**

The International Rep provided a response to the above actions. She began by outlining that due to OU systems being integrated, alternative software can't be used to facilitate better student support mechanisms. The OU however are trialling a scheduled contact service whereby students book an appointment slot and an advisor will call them back. The International Rep tested out the new system herself but was met with an error message when she put in her international phone number. She iterated to the SLT that this new system doesn't work for international students and highlighted the significance of this.

- *(7.7) The Head of EDI has a regular meeting with various heads of student support, including Mikaela Robertson and Susie Hancock, and will use the feedback to support opening a discussion on this at the meeting on Monday 29 April 2024. She will report back into the SLT team space and that might mean a further meeting, with SLT colleagues, as appropriate.*

**ACTION:** The Head of EDI updated the SLT on this action within the Teams space. She explained that she, along with the International Rep, met with Susie Hancock (Deputy Directory, Student Support Operations), Amy King (FBL Head of student Support), and Debbie Hardy (Senior Manager, Student Recruitment and Fees) back at the beginning of June to discuss support for International Students. They asked for a call back option, webchat, a dedicated team looking after international students, scheduled contact, alternative contact methods and asked whether they could reconsider their opening hours. They were told conversations were taking place mid

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June but have not had an update as of yet. The Head of EDI chased for an update and will report back as soon as she gets one.

**ACTIONS: Online Tutorials and Day Schools.**

- *(7.8) Having been taken ill, the Chief Executive will update off-line via SLT team space, re February's **Action 7.10**, to follow up with Josie Fraser on the progress of online tutorials and Adobe Connect as a platform.*

The Chief Executive explained that the OU are exploring this and have a Working Group set up, which she asked for a Student Rep to sit on. She hasn't heard anything since this interaction though. Three members of the SLT had recently attended the 'Futures Of' workshop where online tutorials and their platforms were discussed.

Discussions surrounding the tutorials continued after this action with the SLT raising issues of accessibility, and the need for Associate Lecturers to have training to ensure consistency for all. A suggestion was put forward to have a performance management system set up to track the AIs performance. It was also important to note that not one tutorial style suits every student.

7.2 The actions outstanding from the April student issues discussion are outlined below:

**ACTIONS: OU's platforming of BAE systems**

- *(7.16) Associate Director: Projects & Services to ask the Careers Office to meet with interested SLT members and provide an insight on the OU's position and see if Ellen has a contact at BAE who would be willing to present the facts of what they offer, so SLT can have a more informed perspective.*

Students are asking the University for more information on their investment portfolio, with many accessing information shared after a data request was posted publicly. They are calling for a full divestment from arms. The university has released a very short statement on this and students are asking for more to be done. There is due to be a campaign linked to this but we are not part of this and will await more information on this as it becomes available. Not all students are in agreement on this point and the university represents a wide range of individuals and views- so the Association will monitor student views on this

**ACTIONS: Peri/Menopause**

- *(7.23) Deputy President and WELS Rep offered to lead on the Menopause project to promote a central help resource, with the support of the Head of EDI.*

The Head of EDI&SW and Associate Director: Projects & Services attempted to make contact with Catherine Pestado in the OU but have yet to receive a response. They will continue to chase her for some advice on the menopause support and resources currently offered by the OU. The President suggested reaching out to Emma Greenstein.

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**SECTION D: ITEMS TO NOTE**

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

N/A

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

9.1 This was the SLT's final meeting of their terms so there is no next meeting.