



OU Students
Association

North Region October 2010 Newsletter

Dear Student,

**If you need this newsletter in another format
please contact Vice President Representation
(ousao7@guest.open.ac.uk)**

OUSA? What on Earth is OUSA?

OUSA stands for "Open University Students' Association" and, as an Open University (O U) student, you are automatically a member unless you choose to opt out. OUSA is run for students by students with the aim of improving all aspects of student life from resolving academic issues to increasing the social life often lacking in distance learning.

How does OUSA work?

Branches are the 'first layer' of OUSA – they are the primary point of contact for students and there are branches for the majority of areas in the UK and quite a few dotted throughout Europe.

Each region also has a Forum which aids branches and is in contact with the O U Regional Office through various Regional Meetings.

Above the Forum is the Executive Committee (E C), headed by the President - currently Roz Evans. Every region/nation elects one member of the E C (known as the E C M for the Region/Nation) and there are various other elected officers (called Vice Presidents) who deal with issues such as Student Support, Finance, Representation, and Communications. There is currently an election taking place for E C M North.

North Region

In recent times the North Region has unfortunately been inactive and unrepresented. In the past few months there has been hard work by both local students and members of the Executive Committee to change this and several branches have been re-activated as a result. Because of this, things are now in position to be able to re-activate the Forum. Details of the reactivation meeting are below and all are invited and welcome to attend.



Who to Contact

Until there are elected Regional Officers and an E C M, enquiries should be sent to Vice President Representation who can be contacted by:
Email: ousao7@guest.open.ac.uk
FirstClass: Ousa Vp Representation (on either server)

Regional Meeting

There will be a face to face meeting for the reactivation of the Forum. This will be at:

Newcastle City Library
33 New Bridge Street West
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8AX

And will take place:

Saturday 13th November between 1 and 4pm

Online Meeting

It has been decided that all OUSA meetings must contain an online element in order to allow people who are unable to attend face to face meetings to be included and involved in what we are doing and making decisions.

These meetings are carried out in the Forum. This can be accessed either on FirstClass or StudentHome (via the discussion forums section) by the following method:

Open University > Regions > R09 > OUSA North

The online component of the reactivation meeting will begin:

Saturday 30th October 2010 and end **Saturday 20th November 2010**



FirstClass – a world at your fingertips!



If you haven't already accessed FirstClass, the O U's online conferencing system, you don't know what you're missing out on! Not only can you find students in the local area through our branch conference, but there are also hundreds of conferences dedicated to a wide variety of things from courses to cats.

If you've no experience of FirstClass, don't worry, we have ways and means of getting even the most inexperienced technophobe whizzing round conferences like they'd been there for years. Just get in contact with us and we can send you out some step by step guides to accessing and using FirstClass, or could even arrange for someone to pop round to show you how it's done if you feel you need it!

If you're already fairly confident using a computer, there is some basic information that should help to get you started with FirstClass available from the OUSA website: http://www2.open.ac.uk/ousa/p2_1.shtml

Here is a short article written by Carrie Walton, a student from the region and chair of Newcastle branch:

I'm damned proud to call myself an O U student. I'm also damned proud to say I'm from the North East so any opportunity to boast about both at once is a no-brainer for me! I'm the Chair of the Newcastle Branch which was the first of the North Branches to be regenerated and I'm thrilled that some of our subsequent branch regenerations have been as successful but now we need a cumulative voice to properly represent our region. OUSA are very keen for the North to be represented so please, be involved with regeneration of our Forum. The North deserves a voice, the North deserves to know what's going on with the OU, the North deserves to be able to get together and let off steam about the stresses of trying to work/study/play all at the same time and the Forum is the key to that opportunity being available to us.

Alison Kingan, OUSA's Vice President Student Support has written the following about her own experiences in OUSA – and of course Shaun's as well.

Even though I am student in the South West Region some of you might have seen me wandering about online in the North for a few months while I helped reactivate the North Region. For those who did notice me and thought my knowledge of O U S A appeared overnight – it didn't quite happen like that, it has dripped in over the years. One reason I am delighted that this Forum is being reactivated is because my first O U S A post was branch representative to the Forum. Before holding any posts I accidentally attended Conference 2006 on behalf of my branch when our elected delegate couldn't go due to work commitments. At Conference I met students I'd only seen online and liked what I heard about O U S A. Branch rep to the Forum seemed a good way to dip my toes into O U S A after that and this eventually led me to Branch and then Executive Committee posts. With each post a little more knowledge is absorbed. As Branch representative on the Forum I acted as messenger between Branch and Forum. Whilst there I met some lovely enthusiastic students and fortunately my Executive Committee Member at that time was Roz Evans, the current President. The Forum didn't just involve discussing O U S A business and matters relating to study, we had a bit of fun too. My companion Shaun the Sheep attended Forum meetings, and also went to Conference, Executive

Committee Meetings and O U S A Training. He started off being the representative of Somerset's student Sheep and ended up as President of E W E S A and the Regional Mascot. He worked hard clearing his flock of plagiarism when they studied SXR216 Environmental Science in the Field, he argued they were just being sheep and copying their leader. Shaun is in semi retirement now but has a great replacement in Lambo.

Visit our Web Shop

www.ousa.org.uk

...and click on OUSA shopping for our full range of merchandise and past examination papers for a wide range of courses.

24/7 access, simple, easy to use navigation allows you to order your gifts and exam papers online wherever and whenever it suits you.

Don't delay...visit today!

Donations from the profit of sales are made to OUSET (the Open University Students Educational Trust), OUSA's students charity.

Argh! Help! What do I do now?!

Are you experiencing problems with your studies or having trouble finding your way around the O U systems? Could you benefit from having someone to talk to?

As OUSA is made up of fellow students, we know that sometimes there is no substitute for being able to talk things through with another student. We therefore have a network of volunteer students there for you, for any problem you may have. We have:

Disabled Student Link (D S L) – for advice and information on any issue relating to studying with a disability Email: ousa-dsl@open.ac.uk

Student Support Link (S S L) – for advice and information on support through your study - Email: ousa-ssl@open.ac.uk

Student Academic Links (SALs) – for advice and information on any issues primarily to do with your course or programme of study - Email: ousa-sal@open.ac.uk

Peer Support Online – an anonymous and confidential service provided solely through FirstClass – log in to FirstClass and send a message to PS Supporters to contact the team, or if you have difficulties with this you can make initial contact via the Peer Support administrator by sending an email to OUSA-PS-ADMIN@open.ac.uk.

If you're **unsure** of who is best to answer your query or help with any problem you have then please do get in contact your branch officers and they will point you in the right direction; we're only too aware of how confusing it can be trying to find out who to contact!

In addition to these services there is a group for disabled students that may be able to provide assistance for those students who have difficulties. The

following is an article prepared by Krys Stephenson, a member of the **Disabled Students Group**.

What is the D S G?

The Disabled Students' Group is run by and consists of a group of students from all faculties: some undergraduate, some post-graduate. We are all students either with disabilities or with other long-term physical or mental health problems which can and do cause problems in respect of our ability to study to our full potential.

What does the D S G do?

Our aim is to highlight areas that need improvement within the Open University that will enable other disabled students to overcome obstacles when studying. For example, the timely provision of comb-bound rather than glued-spine books which will lay flat on a desk without needing pressure or force to hold them open; adequate exam time because some students need to take frequent breaks while having to sit for long periods or typing. We have dealt (and are dealing) with these and many other things that are brought to our attention which could help the ever-increasing numbers of students with disabilities studying with the Open University each year. Did you know that number is currently quoted at around 10,000 students?

Does it have anything to do with me?

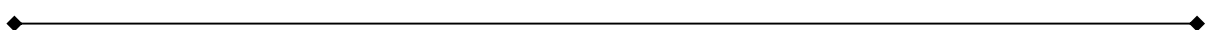
Well, you may feel you don't have a disability. You may dislike the idea of having a label applied to you or you want to keep your disability confidential. However, if you are studying with a long-term condition that affects your day to day ability to study, then maybe the D S G can be of help to you.

We're not into labels and our discussion forum is a closed members' only forum which is free to join. You don't even have to be a member to get help and support. But if your problem is impacting on your ability to study to your full potential with the O U, we can offer you advice or point you in the right direction towards the help you need. We can also take your concerns forward through the O U S A (the Open University Students' Association) as part of a wider policy-making exercise, so that you and other students with similar problems will hopefully not face the same problems in the future.

How do I find you? / contact you? / become a member?

Membership is not compulsory if you have a problem, but by becoming a member you will have access to our members' only forum. Whether you choose to tell others you're a member is up to you. The D S G does not disclose your information to anyone else.

For more details the D S G website can be found at the D S G Website. We look forward to welcoming you.



OUSA Affiliated Societies

Societies are a feature of student life and the O U is no different. Through OUSA there are a number of societies in existence that range from Physics and Psychology to Music and Mountaineering! And if there's not a society for something you're interested in then you can always start one, with a little help and guidance from the OUSA office of course. Some provide newsletters, some hold outings and events, some have regular meetings and workshops but all are there for all O U students and some even encourage friends and family to join in!

For more information on all current societies and contact details for society representatives, pop along to: http://www2.open.ac.uk/ousa/p2_7.shtml or contact the Societies Desk at the OUSA Office by post, telephone or email ousa-societies@open.ac.uk

N U S Extra, I S I C and OUSA Cards

We are excited to announce that the 5th August will be the start of the 5th national year of NUS Extra. 2010/2011 will see a new purchase price for NUS Extra, with the card now costing £11.00 for a year's subscription, and with access to more and more fantastic deals for the coming year which is great news for OUSA members. The International Student Identity (I S I C) upgrade will cost £1.99 from August providing students with a £7.00 saving off the price of the standard ISIC card and access to over 40,000 discounts worldwide.

Additionally there is the OUSA membership card. This is available free of charge to any OU student. In order to get yours send proof of registration, a passport photo and a stamp to:

Membership Cards
OUSA Office
PO Box 397
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BE