



OU Students
Association

OUSA in Scotland

April / May 2011

Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring newsletter of the O U S A (Open University Students Association) in Scotland. In this issue we bring you news of how we are using the forthcoming Scottish elections to increase awareness of part-time students and highlight the inequalities between part-time and full-time in the Scottish education system. Also in this issue is a call for you to tell us your experiences with online delivery of OU module (course) materials, a report from our recent conference the opportunity for you to be a member of our Executive Committee or Board of Trustees and news from our network of informal student groups.

Read on.

Kitty and Susan, your newsletter editors.



If you need this newsletter in another format please contact
ousa@student.open.ac.uk

O U S A in Scotland Calls For Equality

Since our last newsletter events in the higher education world have moved on. As previously reported O U S A in Scotland took an active part in the Scottish Government consultation on the future of Higher Education in Scotland. As well as sending our representatives to consultation meetings we also submitted a formal written response to the consultation making a case for a better deal for our students. You can read our submission at <http://www8.open.ac.uk/platform/news-and-features/ousa-in-scotlands-response-building-smarter-future>.

As we now approach the election period, we are once again being given a prime opportunity to address our concerns to the politicians who will be governing our country. Although the main focus is on full-time students, the statements being issued by the main political parties that they will not introduce tuition fees for these students, shows us that in Scotland at least, the funding of higher education is still considered to be a state responsibility.



There is still a long way to go before we will have equality with our full-time colleagues and being realistic this is not going to happen in the immediate future. However, in the short term, we can still present a strong case for better government support of part-time education. In particular the I L A (Individual Learning Account) system could be reformed so that more students, including postgraduate students, are able to benefit from it. Part-time education will become increasingly important in the future as the need to up-skill and re-skill during our working lives becomes ever more essential. With its flexible model of delivery the Open University is going to be a key player.

O U S A in Scotland has now produced our own election manifesto outlining the case for O U study and presenting a list of key requests, which will be emailed out to prospective parliamentary candidates. Top of this list is a call for eventual equality with our full-time equivalents. If you plan to question candidates in your area on education issues you may wish to obtain a copy. The O U in Scotland has also produced some useful “profiles” available at http://www3.open.ac.uk/near-you/Scotland/p9_4.asp showing the breakdown of students in each parliamentary constituency. If you are going to be attending hustings in your local area you may find these fact sheets very helpful.

Higher education is going to be a key issue in the election campaign. The main focus will inevitably be full-time students, but with four in ten higher education students in Scotland studying part-time, we need to ensure that we are not overlooked. Get in touch with us on regional-forum@ousascotland.org.uk if you wish a copy of our manifesto. We would welcome your involvement to raise the part-time student agenda in your own local area.



O U S A Conference Summary – wanted Charity Trustees

Thank you to all of those of you who gave up a weekend to attend the annual O U S A conference in Milton Keynes. Hopefully you found this a worthwhile experience. For those of you unable to attend we are able to bring a very brief summary of some of the most important points here.

This was the year that O U S A voted for a new constitution that will pave the way for us to become a registered charity. As registering as a charity is now a legal requirement for us, it was important that a constitution acceptable to the charity commissioners was adopted.

However, the work isn't finished yet as the new constitution will be supported by a set of bye-laws detailing the day to day operations of the Association. A draft of the bye-laws is now available but further work is required to turn these into a final document. Like all aspects of the O U S A Futures project, consultation with students is a priority. A forum has been set up on the O U's First Class online system for this purpose. To find this forum, log in to the First Class system, then click on Open University, then OU Students Association and then OUSA Signpost. You will find the forum OUSA Bye Laws Discussion in the resulting list.

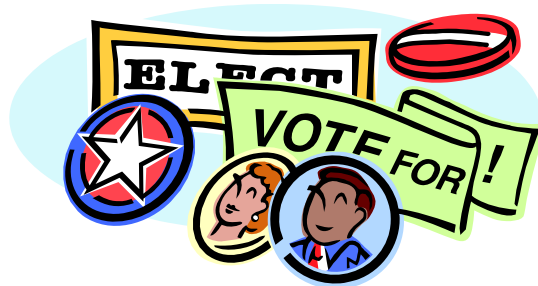
As we move forward with becoming a charity we will require trustees. Our new constitution has provision for up to 2 student trustees who are not already members of its Central Executive Committee. Do you have the experience and skills to become a trustee of our Association? If so, please do get in touch with our office on ousa@student.open.ac.uk to request all the necessary information. All O U students are eligible to apply. Completed nomination forms must be returned to the O U S A office by the 16th May.

Central Executive Committee Member for Scotland - Casual Vacancy

Thank you to everyone who voted in the recent O U S A Executive Committee Member (E C M) elections and elected Ruth Tudor as your E C M for the coming year. Unfortunately, for us in Scotland, Ruth also got herself elected as Deputy President (congratulations Ruth) and will not be able to take up the E C M position. Therefore, a casual vacancy for E C M Scotland has been called. All current students in Scotland are entitled to stand for election.

This is an exciting and challenging voluntary position within O U S A. The postholder is a member of O U S A's Central Executive Committee (C E C) with specific responsibility for ensuring the representation of students within Scotland. They work closely with the O U S A in Scotland Assembly (of which they are an ex-officio member) to provide a communications channel between O U S A within Scotland and O U S A centrally.

Could this be you? For an application pack please contact the O U S A office on ousa@student.open.ac.uk or for an informal chat on what is involved please contact the previous postholder, Susan, on smb2@my.open.ac.uk. Completed nomination forms must be returned to the O U S A office by the 16th May.



O U S A in Scotland Electoral Register

Since the introduction of One Member One Vote for elections within Scotland, all current students in Scotland are now entitled to vote in the above E C M election. However, you do need to sign up to the electoral register beforehand. To do so, send an email to t.k.philemon@open.ac.uk (c.c. r.l.lambert@open.ac.uk) quoting your name, PI number, preferred email address and O U computer user name, and requesting to be added to the Scottish electoral register by the 24th May. If you have previously signed up to the register you do not need to sign up again.

News from our Student Groups

Read on for updates from our network of informal student groups across Scotland, and details of forthcoming events. All groups are run on an informal basis, are open to all OU students within Scotland and are free to join.

Aberdeen and North East Scotland Social Group

The Aberdeen and North East Social Group has two planned events coming up and everyone is welcome to join us. The first is on Saturday 14th May at 7.30pm at the Station Hotel, Aberdeen. At this event, Rob and Moira will report on National Conference which they attended in April. It took place at Milton Keynes, the home of the O U, so it should be a very interesting report. There will also be plenty of time for sharing information about the courses you are doing and the opportunity to ask questions about anything and everything. The second event is taking place on Friday June 10th when some of us are planning to visit the Aberdeen Beer Festival. A few of us went along last year and it was very enjoyable. It takes place down at Pittodrie, home of good football!, starting in the early evening. Again, this is an opportunity to meet some fellow students in a social setting. Please note that soft drinks are also available.

For further details please contact Rob Mackay at robmackay60@hotmail.com.



Edinburgh Social Group visit to Stirling Castle

I had some reading to do for my course and I had something enjoyable to look forward to so I decided to combine the two. On the way to Stirling for the Edinburgh Social Group meeting and tour of Stirling Castle I did some of my reading on the Citylink 909 bus from Edinburgh to Stirling (and on the return journey - honest).

We had an Educational Pass, being students on OU Courses, and had free entry to the Castle with access to guided tours and a Gallery Talk in the Tapestry Studio. The day covered many different course-relevant aspects: Art History, History, Geology, Geography, Social History, Meteorology and more. In fact Stirling is amazingly connected to a huge range of course work... and we went for a late lunch. There was a relatively low turn-out for this outing. Hopefully next time one of the O U S A Student Groups offers an Educational Outing there will be many more people who will take the opportunity to enhance their course work, have a great day out and meet fellow students face-to-face.

Have a look at the information on our Groups for contact details of a Group near you - for face-to-face meetings or virtual meetings of like minded fellow students. It's your OUSA, make the most of it.

C J (Edinburgh).

Scottish Islands Group

This is an informal group of O U students who live on Scottish islands. The purpose of this group is to gather a community of students who live in these islands. Students are able to share experiences, support each other and identify the specific issues that can affect their study with the O U. Students who join this group can access it in Shared Activities online forums, via the Student Home page.

We have recently started having social 'meet ups' in Stornoway. The next ones are due to take place in the Woodlands cafe on Saturday the 7th of May and 4th June at 11.30am. If you would be interested in arranging an O U 'meet up' for your island, please get in touch.

If you would be interested in joining or would like more information please contact Jane Smith at js23992@my.open.ac.uk.



OUA Scotland Student Groups Contact Details

Scottish M C T Network	George	gm266@my.open.ac.uk
Scottish Arts Network	Carole	cpb45@student.open.ac.uk
Scottish Postgraduate Group	George	gm266@my.open.ac.uk
Scottish Disability Network	Adrian	afd22@my.open.ac.uk
Scottish L G B T T Network	George	gm266@my.open.ac.uk
Scottish Remote Students Group	Stuart	smw75@my.open.ac.uk
Scottish Islands Group	Jane	js23992@my.open.ac.uk
South West Scotland Student Network	George	gm266@my.open.ac.uk
Aberdeen and North East Social Group	Rob	robmackay60@hotmail.com
Glasgow Social Group	Amish	aa6292@my.open.ac.uk
Edinburgh Social Group	Kitty	kittyjohnstone@yahoo.com
Scottish MAC Users Group	Ruth	rt974@my.open.ac.uk
Scottish Photography Group	Ruth	rt974@my.open.ac.uk
Scottish Theatres Group	Stuart	smw75@my.open.ac.uk

Student Support from O U S A in Scotland

The Open University in Scotland provides all their Associate Lecturers (A Ls) with a useful folder with guidance re supporting their students. However, there may be a time when neither the A L nor the Support Team in the office can help. This is where the O U S A Student Support Service may be able to help you; I should have used the Student Support Service some years ago when they gave my T M A back to the tutor who had taken marks off for an error in a reference which was not the case, but I didn't know about the position.



Should you have an unresolved problem it could well be worth your while to contact us; we are all volunteer students living in disparate parts of Scotland and are studying a wide range of subjects. We even have a disability specialist amongst our team!

The Open University has been undertaking a wide review of Student Support and we may find that new things are introduced. The O U is very proud of its support for students and please, if you have any problems, don't hesitate to get in touch with your A L or the Support Team in Drumsheugh Gardens, and don't forget O U S A is here for you too!

We are currently in the process of setting up new ways to contact us. In the meantime you can contact us at regional-forum@ousascotland.org.uk.

Susan Scott – O U S A in Scotland Student Support Service

Move to Online Module Delivery

Are you concerned about the O U's move towards delivery more of its module (course) materials online? Is this trend causing difficulties to your studies? Perhaps you prefer hard copy and are now faced with the additional cost of having to print out your own course material. Perhaps you do not have regular access to a computer, printer and internet at home. Perhaps you struggle to download materials over a very slow internet connection. Perhaps you are just not a natural with computer systems and find it all very confusing. Whatever your concerns, we want to hear from you.

O U S A in Scotland is becoming increasingly aware of the dissatisfaction some students are experiencing because of this move. We are about to start a campaign to raise awareness of these concerns to the O U in Scotland. To assist us with this work we need real stories from real students. Please get in touch on regional-fourm@ousascotland.org.uk or write to us at the Milton Keynes address and tell us about how online delivery is affecting you. Your experiences are important to us.

Get Your New O U Email Address

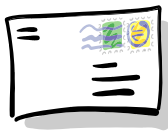
The O U is in the process of decommissioning its First Class online service and moving all module content on to a new system known as the V L E (Virtual Learning Environment).

As part of the decommissioning process our @student.open.ac.uk email addresses will cease to operate and will be replaced with new Google Apps based ones. However, you will not automatically be given one of the new style @my.open.ac.uk addresses as you need to sign up to it. To sign up for this service you will need to be a currently registered student. If you are “in between” modules you will need to wait until you register for your next module.

To get your new email address, go to

<http://learn.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=469447&direct=1> and click on the link that invites you to “Sign up for your Open University Google account”. As well as email you will also have access to other features of the Google Apps for Education service.

Contacting O U S A in Scotland



Email: regional-forum@ousascotland.org.uk or ousa@student.open.ac.uk
Telephone: 01908 652026
Post: O U S A in Scotland, P O Box 397, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6BE
Websites: www.ousa.org.uk and www.ousanearyou.org.uk/r11.htm
Facebook: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=114085388633021
Platform: www8.open.ac.uk/platform/groups/open-university-students-association-in-scotland

*Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter from O U S A in Scotland.
If you require further information please do get in touch with us.*