



OU Students
Association

West Midlands Forum Newsletter January 2011

**This newsletter is available in alternative formats please contact
ousawestmidlands@googlemail.com for details**

Dear Student

Welcome to OUSA in the West Midlands. What 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. There is a new OUSA website just been launched at <http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/index.php>

How does OUSA work?

For students there are branches for the majority of areas in the UK and quite a few dotted throughout Europe. Each nation/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, Roz Evans. Every region elects one member of the E C (known as the E C M for the Region) and there are various other elected officers (called Vice Presidents) who deal with issues such as Student problems, Equal Opportunities, Communications, Representation.

Our E C M for the West Midlands is Jim Mordue he can be contacted by email on the following addresses jim.mordue@bt.com

West Midlands Forum A G M

The West Midlands Forum A G M will take place at the O U Region Centre Harborne on 19th February 2011, from 1030 to 1230.

The online element will take place in the W M Forum in FirstClass, from 12th to 26th February.

All students in the region are welcome to attend either part of the meeting, if you are attending at Harborne please let the Secretary know. This is purely to ensure we have a large enough venue.






Your Regional Committee

Chair	Harvey Skinner	harveyousa@btinternet.com
Secretary	Michaela Hart	michaela.hart@btinternet.com
Treasurer	Steve Johns	
Comms Officer	Dave Moss	

Student Academic Links (seven posts):

- Science - Vacant
- Arts - Vacant
- Education & Languages - Vacant
- Social Science – Curtis Witter
- Health & Social Care - Vacant
- Business - Vacant
- Math Computing and Technology - Vacant

-  Disabled Student Link – Richard Snowdon
-  Student Support Link – Rachel Finch-Smiles
-  Webmaster – Colin Smith & Kate Pardoe

Your Region Needs You

Currently at lot of the Branches on the region are inactive. The West Midlands Forum wants to change this!!

What You Can Do

You can pop into your Branch forum, say “Hi” and see how you can get involved!

Each Branch is entitled to send 2 representatives to the OUSA Forum meetings. It is an opportunity to meet students from other Branches, to let them know any issues specific to your Branch and to report back to the Branch.

Communicating with Other Students

Last year we began posting our own mini newsletters direct to students. These bulletins are called *Quicknews*, and they contain details of the social events as well as providing information about things that are happening in OUSA and events, such as course choice fairs provided by the O U itself.

It is intended to continue to generate these bulletins for the West Midlands region.

Due to data protection rules the bulletin circulation list will require students to opt in for inclusion. Those wishing to receive the WM *Quicknews* bulletin should send an email from their preferred email address to OUSAWestMidlands@googlemail.com



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Likewise, anybody wishing to include anything in the bulletin can send it to the same address.

In addition, OUSA West Midlands has a Facebook Group called OUSA West Midlands (R04) <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=8981034379>.



Argh! Help! 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 so we have volunteers to help you.

Disabled Student Link (DSL) – for advice and information on any issue relating to studying with a disability.

Student Support Link (SSL) – for advice and information on support through your study.

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 On-line

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




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FirstClass – a world at your fingertips!

From either your FirstClass desktop or on "Your O U mailbox and discussion forums" on your Student Home Page, go to:

-  Open University
-  Regions
-  R 0 4
-  OUSA R04

At the top of the screen you will see your individual Branch Conferences, and below that you will see all of your Branch news.

If you have any difficulties accessing your Branch Conference you need to email OUSA Controller with the Branch Name, your PI Number and Name.

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 one of the Branch Officers 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!



Degree Ceremony at Birmingham Symphony Hall, June/July 2011

Volunteers are needed to help out with the marketing stall and processing at this year's Degree Ceremony in Birmingham. If you feel you are able to spare a day or even half a day please contact our Degree Ceremony Co-ordinator, Joan Jones jrj23@student.open.ac.uk for more details.



Want to be a Residential School Rep?

Residential Schools are both hard work and fun, and not only for the students on the courses. Even though they are always actively busy, our reps enjoy the Residential School event as much as the other students do. If you think you could be part of our team, we'd love to hear from you. All newly appointed reps undergo a days training and will receive the full support of the Students Association. Although the Residential Schools take place predominately during the summer months it is preferable to apply early in the year. To apply, you will need to be a full member of OUSA and will be required to supply the names and contact details of two referees to support your application.

If you are interested in applying to be a Residential School Rep, you can contact the OUSA Residential Schools Team direct at ousa-resi-rep@open.ac.uk for more information and request an application pack.

Are you a Student in the Dudley area?

Currently Dudley Branch is dormant but we'd like to get it up and running again on a purely social basis. If you are interested in meeting up with students in your area please contact Dudley Point of Contact - Michaela Hart mh8@student.open.ac.uk to find out more.

Are you a student in Wolverhampton?

The Branch in Wolverhampton is run at 2 different locations so please check the branch forum for more details or contact the Branch Secretary John Mathys on jm7764@student.open.ac.uk

Please could all other Branches and Point of Contacts contact Harvey Skinner with details for inclusion in the next newsletter.