

Reports to Council

5th Week Council Trinity 2016

Becky	Howe	President	Received
Ali	Lennon	VP Welfare & Equal Opportunities	Received
Lucy	Delaney	VP Women	Received
Nick	Cooper	VP Graduates	Received
Cat	Jones	VP Access & Academic Affairs	Received
Emily	Silcock	VP Charities & Community	Received
Tom	Wadsworth	Academic Affairs Campaign Officer	Received
Adam	Kellett	Access & Admissions Officer	Received
Hilal	Yazan	Black & Minority Ethnic Students Officer	Received
Eric	LeGresley	Clubs and Societies Support Officer	
Yoni	Stone	Community Outreach & Charities Officer	
Fairlie	Kirkpatrick Baird	Environment & Ethics Officer	Received
Bo	Zhang	Grad Academic Affairs Officer	Received
Rebecca	Kuperberg	Grad Welfare Officer	Received
Kirithi	Bellamkonda	Grad Womens' Officer	Received
Katy	Haigh	Health & Welfare Officer	Received
Meera	Sachdeva	International Students' Officer	Received
Catherine	Kelly	LGBTQ Officer	Received
Ronak	Patel	Disabled Students' Officer	Received
Holly	Roy	Student Parents and Carers' Officer	Received
Tuesday	Doherty	Womens' Campaign Officer	Received

This report booklet also includes a termly report from OUSU's Trustee Board and a report on the Michaelmas Elections from OUSU's ex-Returning Officer.

Sabbatical Officers

Becky Howe – President

Hello folks,

On May 16th, the Government released their **White Paper** on Higher Education. It proposes linking teaching excellence to tuition fees, meaning that institutions deemed 'elite' will be able to **raise home undergraduate fees** above £9000 per year. In response to this, I have:

- Written up a summary of the document, and of the resulting Bill, to circulate to common room presidents
- Set up a forum for student union officers at the other Russell Groups in England to discuss joint responses to the White Paper (as it's likely Russell Group institutions would be the first to be deemed 'excellent' enough to raise fees).

Nick, Cat and I will also be doing a response to the technical consultation on the Teaching Excellence Framework (i.e. how the measuring of 'excellence' will be done).

Other things I've been up to in the last couple of weeks:

1. **Welfare Report:** our report, which we've compiled from the welfare survey which 6000 of you lovely people took part in last term, has gone in draft form to its first committees. We're doing more final drafts now, and want to be able to publish it in the next couple of weeks!!!
2. **NUS:** In the interests of transparency, I want to let you know that I am the campaign leader for 'Yes to NUS'. This is taking a fair amount of my time at the moment. If you'd like any more information on the campaigns, please email me (rebecca.howe@ousu.ox.ac.uk), or the leader of 'No Thanks, NUS', Anne Cremin (anne.cremin@magd.ox.ac.uk).
3. **PREVENT:** On Tuesday of 5th week, I'm speaking on the panel on PREVENT, as part of the Students Not Suspects tour. This event was (/is, depending on when you're reading this) a collaboration between OU Islamic Society, OUSU's Campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality (CRAE), and NUS.

Have a lovely week,

Becky x

Ali Lennon – VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities

This week I've been doing a range of things and have attended some of my last committees:

- Welfare Survey – I've been writing up college reports and organising the prizes for the best performing common rooms.
- Committees – I attended my last committee regarding Student Health and Welfare. I also attended my last meeting of the Consultative Committee for Health and Safety and I've been assisting the Safety Office with a number of tasks pertaining to student health and safety.
- Prevent – I've been preparing for the last few meetings and have been liaising with a number of University staff on a number of issues including sensitive research guidance and welfare protocols.
- Leadership Course – I've sent out a proposal to the liberation campaigns/officers for comment

which concerns encouraging individuals from underrepresented groups to run for senior positions in student led organisations.

- Interviewing – I've been on the panel to select the new Membership Services Manager and a new member of the Student Advice Service.
- Campaigns – I've been assisting with a few bits and pieces in some of the campaigns.
- Trans Policy – I'm trying to restart a project with the University to create a college template trans policy. I'll work closely with members of the LGBTQ groups in pursuit of this.

I've also been dealing with all manner of enquiries and assisting students with some rather difficult welfare issues by liaising with a number of senior college officials.

As ever, if you have any questions please get in touch.

All the best comrades,

Ali

Lucy Delaney – VP Women

Training

I have finally finished the First Respondent training of this half of Trinity Term. The sessions were extremely successful and I am very pleased with the turnout. The Women's Officer training has also gone from strength to strength, and I am now in the process of organising socials for Women's Officers, giving them more opportunities to share best practice.

Consent Workshops

I am starting to plan the execution of consent workshops next Michaelmas Term, along with Queer Consent (and Race workshops).

University

I have been working with Cat, VP Access and Academic Affairs and the University's Student Attainment Gap Working Group on producing a qualitative study in an attempt to address the student attainment gap.

Cat Jones – VP Access and Academic Affairs

The White Paper (and the Teaching Excellence Framework)

At the time of writing this, the government white paper has only been public for a few days but we are working hard to identify the implications of its contents and to begin to organise our resistance to many of the proposals; in particular the potential raising of tuition fees in line with inflation, and the really poor metrics being proposed in relation to measuring teaching excellence. We will be able to give more information to students in council.

Suspension

We have made really quick progress with senior tutors committee on the development of common guidelines for all colleges. Several improvements were made to the first draft of the guidelines after I

appealed to the the Senior Tutors' review group. The second draft is going to Senior Tutors' Committee for approval in week 6. The paper largely represents progress towards most of SusCam's key recommendations but it suggests a regressive step on entry to college premises. The guidelines suggest that all suspended students should require explicit permission to enter college property at all times. Their justification is that colleges are academic communities and that suspended students are a distraction to on-course students. After consultation with JCR Presidents and SusCam, I have put forward an alternative proposal proposal to require permission Monday-Friday but not at weekends. I will update council on our progress.

Review of Biochemistry

I spent 2 days in the Biochemistry Department as a member of the review panel. We met a range of undergraduate and graduate students, examined NSS and barometer data, and I shared an anonymous submission from students with the panel. The key undergraduate issues I highlighted included student understanding of marking criteria, tutorial discrepancies and the high proportion of 2.2s. The key graduate issues included gender gaps in student satisfaction, lack of graduate community and clarity/effectiveness of complaints routes. Biochemistry students will get the opportunity to see the final report and are welcome to contact me for more information.

Committees

Since the last OUSU council I have represented students on the following committees; Access Target Working Group, Sports Strategic Subcommittee, University Council, Admissions Committee and the Joint Subcommittee of Education Committee with Student Members.

Emily Silcock - VP Charities and Community

Hi Council,

Here's what I've been up to over the last couple of weeks.

Environment and Sustainability

- Had lunch with E&E Reps with the Sustainability department at the university.
- I've been putting together Veggie Starter packs ahead of #VeggiePledge next year. This has been going really well this week – Kew gardens has just sent me 1000 packets of seeds to be included in them.

Voter Registration

- Continued with #Pledge2Reg to get people to register to vote ahead of the EU referendum. We currently have 574 pledges.
- Organised for 5000 postal vote application forms to be delivered to pigeon holes, as a lot of people won't be around in 9th week.
- Sent out voter registration kits to every college.

Bikes

- I've been progressing with my plan to set up a scheme to sell cheap, good quality bikes to students ahead of next term. I've managed to find a supplier and now I'm working on the logistics of sales.

Vice Chancellors Social Impact Awards

I was part of the judging panel for these awards. It was great to see all the amazing things that students are doing in Oxford.

Campaigns

- Environment campaign:
 - Divestment have been making good headway on Divest-Invest.
 - Our new edible planting group has managed to find a space outside of Earth Sciences for planting!
- Community campaign
 - On Your Doorstep are in the process of planning their Homelessness Awareness Week for Michaelmas. They are partnering with a group of local charities to deliver a huge sleepout fundraiser.
 - I've also been supporting them to lobby the university on procurement and employment that supports people who have been homeless.
- Global justice campaign (name tbc)
 - I'm still working with Tom on getting this off the ground, but the subgroups are making fast headway.
 - I've been supporting Electronics watch to lobby the university about ethical procurement of electronics.

RAG

- RAG have recruited event leaders for two of their biggest events next year: Lost and VarCity.
- We've also been planning for smaller events this term, like summer Vills and Zorb Football.
- Sign ups are still open for RAG's flagship event for this term, the Three Peaks Challenge

As always, please do get in contact at vpcandc@ousu.ox.ac.uk.

Emily

Nick Cooper – VP Graduates

Evening, Council! Sorry for the fairly long report – but you can always choose not to read it. Below is a summary of what I've been up to, followed by a run through of my manifesto pledges (and what I've done on them, and what I intend to finish in the next 5 weeks) and then a report on my DPhil survey – as Council mandated me to do by this week. As ever, email me if you have questions or thoughts.

My last fortnight

- **Graduate Forum and Vision** – we had a very useful Graduate Forum meeting, where we discussed where graduate students wanted improvements in the colleges and University, what OUSU should be campaigning on, and what OUSU should be doing differently. I'm probably

going to hold another at the end of term, but will write up the thoughts and bring them to 7th week Council as a Vision for what OUSU should be prioritising. See below for another Vision. We love Visions.

- **Committees** – Fairly quiet on this front, for once. Main highlight was that I took part in the review of one of the Permanent Private Halls, St Stephen’s House, as part of PPH Supervisory Committee (this was a real birthday treat). We review them all on a six-year basis, and by having breakfast there, I ticked a difficult one off the “dining in Oxford” list.
- **Access Vision** – Vision number 2. Cat and I have been holding focus groups and generally thinking about what we can do to improve access to undergraduate and graduate education. We’ve put together a strategic document containing students’ beliefs and priorities, which you’ll find on the agenda today. Please give us comments and we’ll improve it in time for final approval in 7th week.
- **Masters focus groups and survey** – I’ve ran a few extra, final focus groups and am now writing up a report on the state of Masters courses (and student satisfaction with these) across the University. This will go to the University in 9th week with recommendations.
- **OUSU internal stuff** – I sat on the interview panel for our new Communications Manager, did a few more things towards handover, and as ever, immersed myself fully in governance.

See you after this at my final Council as a Sabbatical officer ☺

Nick

Manifesto pledges and progress

Pledge	Already achieved	To do
Run a survey and focus groups on Masters course satisfaction	Survey = 500 responses 14 focus groups done (a couple more booked in) Student Barometer survey analysed	Report is being finished this week; going to University in 9 th week with recommendations. University have agreed to review this in MT16.
Support other officers in examining the taught Masters gender gap	Reviewed annual statistics by gender, race and other factors in committee; I stressed importance of exploring & reducing gaps	Issue referred to Student Attainment working group, which has two OUSU officers on it
Lobby divisions to introduce minimum expectations for supervision	Survey completed by almost 800 DPhil students. Highlighted as key priority by University’s Education Committee; discussed across committees and in other settings	Final report is being completed this week; will go to University in MT16. Meeting with divisional officers to consider

		potential for improving minimum standards
Continue to lobby the collegiate University for more funding	Spoke in favour of increased matched funding for graduate scholarships at University Council and elsewhere	Discussion in University Council in 9 th week about improving graduate offers; to stress this point again
Assess graduate students' welfare and wellbeing	Helped to construct graduate version of Welfare Survey, completed by 800 graduate students. Analysed results for taking to University committees	Ensure that graduate welfare needs are similarly prioritised in the completion of a Welfare Vision
Continue to push for more graduate accommodation, and to keep rents low	I have stressed how crucial accommodation is to both the University and colleges; considerable discussion now focuses on providing all first years with a room. Argued down the proposed rent increase on graduate accommodation.	Again, University Council is to discuss improving graduate offers; I will aim for a guarantee of accommodation for 1 st years in the medium term
Support graduate Common Room Presidents with rents and charges	Assisted with the creation of a rent negotiation booklet; met with almost every Common Room President individually; helped provide training.	Collate a definitive record of final rent offers, to see how much Common Rooms have saved their members
Push for more teaching opportunities and training for graduate tutors	Highlighted this at all departmental reviews I have sat on; noted as a key priority from the <i>Student Written Submission</i> to the University's Education Committee.	Discussions with Continuing Education and divisions to see how this can be improved. To be reviewed by the University in MT16 (unfortunately delayed from this term)

Headline results of DPhil survey

A full report will come to 7th week Council, but as mandated, here is an update of the survey of DPhil students (responses: 773) on working conditions and supervisor standards and expectations:

- Currently, 60% of respondents have only one supervisor – but crucially, over a quarter would prefer co-supervision. Only 10% of those who are co-supervised would rather only have one.

- Almost half of respondents indicated that they did not establish usual working hours early in their degree
- Less than a third of students felt that the decision about working hours was a joint decision between them and their supervisor, as is recommended by the University
- Free text comments elucidated the view that many students felt dissatisfied that expectations had not been set out clearly at the start of the DPhil
- Less than 40% of respondents stated that they were informed about their leave and vacation entitlement
- Most students did indicate that they understood the milestones of their degree (especially transfer/confirmation of status)
- The average frequency of meeting supervisors was every 3 weeks, but this (as expected) varied massively between academic divisions. 20% of students reported that they met their supervisors once every two months, or less frequently than this – and perhaps similarly, 20% of students were unhappy with the availability of their supervisor
- On the whole, respondents were happy with feedback from their supervisor – but almost a quarter felt it had insufficient detail
- Only 40% of students indicated that their supervisor had provided them with careers advice or help with what to do after the DPhil
- 20% of respondents felt that their supervisor had not supported them with skills development; a further 2% stated that their supervisor had actively blocked them from doing skills training
- There was a mix of views on teaching opportunities, with expected problems such as opaqueness of these opportunities, varied opinions on training, and insufficient opportunities in the first place
- A range of views were expressed on the size of students' research groups – some felt this was too large (particularly in science subjects); some felt too isolated (particularly in the humanities and social sciences)

The report for students and the University will make recommendations along the following lines (there may be more; they may change; comments welcome):

1. To recommend co-supervision as the standard model, with benefits for students (for gaining multiple opinions and not being reliant on one person), supervisors (to reduce workload) and particularly postdoctoral researchers (who often need supervisory experience, and may benefit from being co-supervisor)
2. To ensure that where co-supervision is not in place, students have a departmental advisor or similar – to guarantee a second point of contact for academic discussions
3. To ensure an initial setting of expectations between student and supervisor happens as early as possible
4. To set out working hours clearly, and report this back to the division, early in the DPhil (within four weeks). This should include an expected working week of 40 hours/week, with a working week not to go above 48 hours except in exceptional circumstances. Students should be entitled to (and encourage to take) leave of at least six weeks per year.
5. That on average, supervisors should meet their students no less than once a month – and preferably more frequently than this, if the student requests this. [Exceptions due to e.g. field work, sabbatical leave are likely, but alternative communication should be made available.]
6. To improve communication of skills training opportunities, and for supervisors to encourage participation in these.
7. For the University to review graduate teaching opportunities (note: this is already planned for Michaelmas Term 2016), to promote greater transparency of opportunities, and to increase the number of opportunities open to graduate students who want to do this.

8. To encourage departments to facilitate bringing students together to share ideas, for instance by providing funding for seminar series by DPhil students or similar (which has the secondary advantage of providing presentation experience).
9. As part of 8, to encourage more interdisciplinary work and sharing of knowledge and information.
10. For the University to continue to work to improve on-time submission rates, and monitoring of supervisor-student relationships via the successor to the GSS system.

Those are my initial thoughts – let me know what you think!

Nick

Part-Time Executive Officers

Tom Wadsworth – Academic Affairs Campaign Officer

There was an emergency SusCam meeting last week in order to discuss the important paper which the university is going to look at, and hopefully implement as their base suspension policy. This required wording and re-wording points to give clarity but also try to pressure for acceptance amongst senior tutors. It is a long document but will hopefully be implemented.

Adam Kellett – Access and Admission Officer

I sat on an access panel for Corpus Christi's Unity Week, where we all described what we believe is important about access and fielding questions from the audience about admissions as well as how access is linked to the student experience.

Target Schools had a steering group, where we discussed our stance on the NUS amongst regular evaluations of shadowing days and the upcoming African-Caribbean Society shadowing day which Target Schools assists.

Hilal Yazan – BME Students Officer

I don't have as much to report this week as I was unfortunately unable to attend the Race Equality Working Group last Monday. I did, however, attend the Peers of Colour launch event on Saturday where I and many others spoke in praise of such an initiative which I hope BME and international students will make use of. As I mentioned earlier, race workshop facilitator training will be happening in the coming weeks, so those who want to run workshops in your colleges, please do get in touch! Another very important event is the Students Not Suspects talk is on Tuesday, which should hopefully provide a great discussion on Prevent and why we are opposed to it.

Fairlie Kirkpatrick Baird – Environment and Ethics Officer

Hi Council!

Excitingly, I'm working on finalising the Sustainable Guide! The committee is having a final meeting today (Monday) to discuss practicalities and work out details like what order to put the sections in, and then I'll go through and finish editing everyone's section to standardise it for when we give it to the designer. The past two weeks we've had two meetings editing the sections and discussing how best to organise the guide, so I'm very excited to be having our final meeting today. Also, I've been working with Emily to establish the new Environment campaign. Sadly our meeting last week was cancelled, but we're trying to reschedule for this week, since the first meeting was very promising.

Bo Zhang – Graduate Academic Affairs Officer

Dear council, for the past and the next few weeks, I will be studying the University of Oxford graduate student barometer data from the past 5 years. I'm interested in the multitude of quantifiable parameters that reflect student satisfaction and how that has changed from year-to-year. Attention will also be given to the differences between divisions and colleges and the different types of graduate studies (research/teaching based master, D.Phil, etc.). Each field will be investigated separately with relevant comparative study. Highlights on the positives and negatives will be noted and sought for resolutions of improvement. Concerns and recommendations will be drafted and included into the paper by VP Grad to university/college later in this term

Rebecca Kuperberg – Graduate Welfare Officer

This week, I am running two events: a meeting of the Welfare in Fieldwork and Research working group on Monday and Grad WelfCom on Tuesday. These will be the main events I will run this term, but I will continue to be in communication with welfare officers about postgrad needs and concerns. Please be in touch with any questions!

Katy Haigh – Health and Welfare Officer

Dear Council,

Not too much to report as I have been prioritising my responsibilities as women's officer for my college as we have recently had a week long 'equalities week' which has taken up most of my time. As usual I have been meeting periodically with the VP WEO and help them out wherever possible, I am also making progress with my various manifesto promises. I have also begun looking into organising a WelfCom for the end of Trinity term.

Best,
Katy

Meera Sachdeva – International Students’ Officer

Over the past couple of weeks I have been making progress on my initiative to allow international freshers to come to Oxford prior to the Sunday of 0th week. We passed a motion in last week's OUSU Council to mandate OUSU's sabbatical officers to support this initiative and to mandate international officers in colleges to bring this up with their common rooms. A motion similar to the one passed in OUSU council has been sent to every JCR to be proposed at their next JCR meeting. International officers at each college are now responsible for proposing the motion. A survey has also been sent out to all international officers to try collecting data on which colleges currently allow international freshers to arrive early and what events are organised for them.

Catherine Kelly – LGBTQ Officer

Over the last two weeks I have been focusing on putting the finishing touches on the LGBTQ 101 workshops. With help from other members of the LGBTQ Campaign I have now finished putting the workshop itself together and I have started to train LGBTQ college reps to facilitate them. So far I have held two facilitator training sessions, with two more organised for the coming week. I am also in the process of putting together handbooks both for people facilitating and taking part in the workshops. I have advised LGBTQ college reps on how they can best make the workshops a part of freshers’ week.

I have also been continuing to hold LGBTQ college rep meetings, which I find very helpful in finding out what help and support college reps need. Following from discussions I have had with reps, I will be sending around information about how to go about implementing trans policies and gender neutral bathrooms in college.

I have also been taking part in the Yes to NUS Campaign as I feel strongly that it is crucial for LGBTQ students that we remain affiliated with the NUS.

Ronak Patel - Disabled Students’ Officer

Over the last two weeks I have been primarily liaising with college disability reps, and there will be a general disability rep meet up this Friday. This will be crucial for the work ahead such as implementing disability feedback focus groups in colleges, and lobbying colleges to take up access audits, as it is the reps in colleges who have the capacity to help implement these initiatives.

I have also been liaising with disability staff of the university, especially Katharine Terrell, on how to tweak the proposed guide for college feedback sessions re disability I have been working on. I have received some extremely useful advice and by the end of term the guides should be completely ready.

I am also starting to draft a small guide on what is what relating to disability at the university of Oxford, explaining policies in place such as the common framework for disabled students and how it will be implemented, as well as the information on the legal rights of disabled students from NUS resources. I'm aiming for this to go online and also potentially be distributed at disability events at the start of Michaelmas for new students.

Holly Roy – Student Parents and Carers’ Officer

- I am continuing to prepare for the student parent BBQ on Saturday 28th; currently there are 17 families signed up
- Some parents at Court Place Gardens have raised concerns about local residents in Rose Hill using the CPG property for smoking. I have contacted the accommodation offices about this and they are working on improved security at the site
- We are hoping to contact Colleges to ask whether they would be willing to include information for student parents on their website including links to relevant websites.

Tuesday Doherty – Womens’ Campaign Officer

Our lemonade event in 3rd week proved hugely successful. We had 4 amazing black women on the panel, two who had travelled from other Universities in order to speak. The attendance was outstanding with around 150 people coming to see the panel and the screening. Since this event, we have had a significant increase in the reach and attendance of our events. Our 4th week survival self care box event showed that WomCam is now known to a wider selection of people - many who had never attended campaign events before. We held elections at the start of the event and have 5 new committee members (BME working chair, Feedback Officer, Common room support officer, and two General committee members) which now means we have a full and very effective committee.

We have also held regular committee meetings that have been well attended. We democratically voted to support the Yes to NUS campaign and will release a statement soon. In these meetings we also organised this week’s event which is a screening of ‘10 things I hate about you’ in Queens College. We have updated our term card to include a joint WomCam and English Society poetry event which we are very much looking forward to, as well as a WomCam social. We are very pleased with the committee and how our events are going this term!

OUSU Campaigns

Target Schools – Benjamin Peacock and Adam Kellett

Shadowing

This term has hosted two shadowing days so far, with another planned in collaboration with the Afro-Caribbean Society for 6th week.

The issue from the last shadowing days to note is a miscommunication with New College regarding lunches in 2nd week, but we resolved this by putting on a picnic in the grounds of New College at the event itself.

Otherwise shadowing has gone fantastically. We have received feedback of 8 out of 10 average, have implemented a new scheme at registration to smooth out procedure AND have now introduce a scheme whereby students in attendance can apply for reimbursement of their travel costs. Onwards and upwards!

Roadshows

There is some good and some bad news on this front.

To the good news, funding has been confirmed in full for the Roadshow in West Yorkshire that is to be run in collaboration with Magdalen College.

The bad news is that one Roadshow officer has to pull out from running the Roadshow in Kent. As a result, co-chair and ex-roadshow officer Ben Peacock will be rolling back the years to run this Roadshow in collaboration with St. Hugh's College. Funding for this Roadshow is secured in part through a £200 donation from St. Hugh's JCR.

Affiliation to the NUS

Many of you may have seen the statement Adam and I have made regarding the NUS. For those that haven't, the following is the statement that was approved at our Steering Group on the 18th of May:

"A statement from the Co-Chairs of Target Schools – "Oxford will be better off by maintaining its affiliation with the NUS."

As you are aware, Oxford University Student Union (OUSU) has recently called a referendum on its affiliation with the National Union of Students (NUS). The polls for the referendum open on the 31st of May...

Adam and I wish to make it clear that Target Schools support [Yes to NUS Oxford](#).

We are making this statement as Target Schools believe that leaving the NUS will have huge implications on Access and Outreach work. As Target Schools is the largest student led Access and Outreach campaign, we felt comment had to be made.

Our reasons to remain affiliated with the NUS are broken into three distinct parts and are as follows:

1. Access and Outreach doesn't stop once students have a place: People seem to have the impression that Access and Outreach work only focuses on getting people into Oxford in the first place. Although true in some situations, Access and Outreach work should include ensuring that current student experiences are as positive as possible.

It is widely acknowledged that the NUS lobby and support liberation groups and students from the most diverse backgrounds. This positive impact of the NUS is reflected by several OUSU campaigns supporting [#YestoNUS.Oxford University LGBTQ Society](#), [OUSU Campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality](#) and the [Oxford Students' Disability Community](#) all have said [#YestoNUS](#). (This is not an exhaustive list of liberation campaigns supporting Yes to NUS.) The voices of these liberation groups deliver the message that being in the NUS helps them to function and improve the lives of the diverse groups of students the campaigns represent and care for.

Target Schools feel that if we are to withdraw from the NUS, liberation groups will be unable to maintain the excellence of their work. Subsequently, the quality of life for diverse groups of students will reduce significantly. So why does this matter to Access and Outreach work? When a student from a community that does not traditionally send students to Oxford heads back to where they are from, friends and family ask what Oxford is like. This is likely to be one of few testimonies the student's friends and families will hear. The current student will be honest. If they have had a negative time at Oxford they will say so. It is this that will lead to their peers who are most likely from similar backgrounds having a negative testimony of Oxford. This in turn will lead to a reduction in applications to Oxford from such diverse groups which would be a blow for the Access and Outreach work that currently takes place in Oxford.

2. Access to Higher Education (HE): You may or may not be aware that government has released a white-paper suggesting increases to student fees yet again. The recommendation is that 'elite' Universities will be able to increase tuition fees at the rate of inflation. It must be recognised that the cost of access to HE has forever been a factor for those wishing to gain degree-level education. As a result of these changes, poorer students will be faced with the option to either attend a 'non-elite' university with £9,000 fees, or attend Oxbridge and other Russell Group universities with higher fees. The result is that a so-called 'better education' will cost more money. The impact of these changes on social mobility does not bear thinking about. Let us just say that access to money should not be the primary consideration when applying to Oxford.

Target Schools believes that remaining affiliated with the NUS is vital to lobby against these changes. It should be noted that the NUS is well known for lobbying to reduce the cost of HE and maintain various types of financial support for students. For instance, in the last year the NUS lobbied to help ensure that: £41,000,000 remained in the pockets of students who are young parents; £350,000,000 remained in the Student Opportunity Fund; and that £100,000,000 would be put into student bursaries at Colleges. It is Target Schools believe that collaboration inside the NUS will be the best possible force to resist the proposed increases to tuition fees, thereby ensuring that University education costs the same at whichever institution a student attends.

3. The Exclusive Nature of Oxford: One of the main objectives of Target Schools is to remove the mystique of Oxford. There are already a great number of things that makes Oxford different, unique and ultimately daunting for candidates that are applying. We believe that adding yet another difference, that being disaffiliated with the NUS, would increase the number of concerns that an applicant to Oxford would have. It is submitted that many would see Oxford as even more of an exclusive environment and therefore not apply. The Daily Mail would be all over it. Imagine the headline: 'Oxford students collectively scoff: "We don't need the NUS, we are Oxford!"' As we want to see numbers of those applying from non-traditional backgrounds continuously rise, we again stress the importance of staying affiliated to the NUS.

It is on these grounds that Target Schools believe that Oxford will be better off by maintaining its affiliation with the NUS. Therefore we urge you to vote #YestoNUS between May the 31st and June the 2nd.

[Benjamin Peacock](#) & [Adam Kellett](#), Target Schools Co-chairs"

We wish to make clear to council that this is Target Schools position having followed the correct procedures. For the record, we felt we had to make this statement due to the specific effects disaffiliation will have on Access and Outreach work; that being our area of practice and expertise.

That bring to an end our report for council this term.

Report from OUSU's Trustee Board to Council

As OUSU is a charity, we have a Trustee Board that oversees our activities, looks at our strategic direction, and reviews our finances. There is clearly a need for close communication with Council, which sets OUSU's political stances and decides what Sabbatical and other officers should be doing day-to-day. As such, the Trustee Board writes a termly report to Council on its activities.

The Trustee Board comprises:

- The 6 Sabbatical officers (the President is chair)
- Four External Trustees – appointed by Council for their expertise in particular areas (such as finance, law or student unions)
- Three Student Trustees, elected in our annual elections (or by-elections) – Alex Bishop, Rose Vennin, Benjamin Woolf

The Board last met on 4 February and discussed the following things:

- A report from our Chief Executive – covering areas such as OUSU's office (and a potential move of location), future staff appointments, OUSU's budget and finances, and strategic questions about OUSU's future (including potential for expansion into other areas, our role in assessing teaching excellence and OUSU's identity and engagement)
- Student Trustees – the Board noted that only one candidate had run for this position in Michaelmas 2015, and discussed how to encourage candidates, and how to better support Student Trustees.
- Reports from the six Sabbatical Officers (similar to those sent to Council) were gratefully received, and some areas discussed
- A paper was brought on changes to OUSU's governance – the marked simplification was welcomed, and some areas were considered before they came to Council [these are the proposals that have passed through Council this term]
- An update was given on OUSU's Complaints Procedure, which was amended with the University's provision earlier this term. The new Procedure is now on OUSU's website.

The full minutes can be found at <http://ousu.org/pageassets/your-union/trustees/04-02-16-Minutes-Online.pdf>, and the Board will meet again in 8th week of this term.

Further details are available from Becky Howe, President and Chair of the Board, president@ousu.ox.ac.uk. You are also welcome to contact the Student Trustees or any other Sabbatical Officer.

Election Report: Statutory Elections Michaelmas Term 2015 – Matt Collyer

Introduction:

This report sets out the elements of relative success during the process and opportunities for future development. If this proves useful for those carrying out election functions in future elections then it will have been a worthwhile exercise.

The statutory elections were held on Tuesday 17th November until Thursday 19th November 2015 (6th week of Michaelmas term). The manifesto deadline was Friday 6th November (4th week) Briefings were held on Friday 6th, Saturday 7th, and Sunday 8th November. Hustings were then carried out in 5th and 6th week (see appendices for timetable).

Successful elements:

Complaints: There were no complaints submitted during the election which proved especially pleasing. In general it appeared possible to resolve most problems through discussion between the candidates. Issues did arise regarding the use of social media

Expenses: candidates received a clear explanation of their expenditure allowances at the start of the process. All receipts were submitted on time.

Candidate conduct: conduct was exemplary throughout the process, candidates were helpful towards those performing election functions and generally cooperative and supportive towards one another.

Media contact: there was a reasonable amount of media coverage in the student press, the media was generally effective at ensuring that all candidates received an equal level of coverage.

Candidate briefings: providing a clear explanation of the process and the rules in the initial briefing sessions was helpful in ensuring that all candidates were aware of the process. Stressing the importance of University Statute XI regarding harassment was helpful in providing a definition of acceptable conduct by candidates.

Areas for development:

Financial support: an ad hoc system of financial support was introduced during the process with £300 being made available to candidates upon requesting it from the returning officer. Of this £173 was claimed by three sabbatical candidates. This should be in place from the start in the next set of elections, asking people to make an honest declaration of need seemed to avoid abuse during this process.

Cooperation rules: the election regulations state that no cooperation can occur between supporters of slates. This effectively suggests that people cannot make public endorsements of candidates from multiple slates. This is impossible to police and proved somewhat confusing for candidates, fortunately there were no complaints on these grounds.

Number of hustings: there were over twelve hustings held throughout the process, this proved to be too much for many candidates and were often poorly attended. Keeping hustings well-advertised and reducing numbers to central hustings plus around 3-4 others would be more than sufficient.

Style of hustings: there were a number of suggestions by candidates and others that hustings be carried out in a debate format. During this process candidates simply answered the same questions with no opportunity for rebuttal. This allowed a large number of questions to be asked but reduced debate between candidates. In order to improve the quality of hustings it may be beneficial to trial the debate format, with rebuttal allowed, but the simple process does have its merits in terms of efficiency. It also helps prevent acrimonious disputes between candidates.

Inviting PTE to hustings: the part time executive were invited to hust at central hustings, in hindsight this was a mistake as it made the evening last far too long. In future it would be wise if only sabbatical candidates are allowed to hust, although it should be noted that PTE will be removed if the byelaw changes pass.

Use of social media: this is currently left very vague in the election regulations and RO directions. Rather strict rules apply to email lists but not to Facebook groups. During this election candidates were advised to create pages for the purpose of the election, and only to use groups which other campaigns would have access to via their supporters or directly. For example, candidates would be allowed to post on their JCR Facebook page to publicise their campaign and the election, but not to suggest that supporting them was an official position of the JCR (e.g. if they are its president).

Turnout: low turnout is an ongoing problem in OUSU elections at all levels. There are no simple answers to this issue. It is not my belief that prize draws etc. provide much of an incentive for participation although it may have some influence at the margins. The collegiate system ensures that much of the work that would be carried out by university wide students' unions elsewhere in the country is in fact organised at a more local level, this reduces the competencies of OUSU and has an impact on its perceived relevance to students. Despite the importance of its work limited budgets, lack of a central location, and absorption of student energy in JCR politics reduces engagement. Such issues are, to a certain extent, an inevitable result of the collegiate structure. The only avenues open to those who seek to increase engagement is to continue with the use of face to face engagements with JCRs and student groups, along with online communication.

Election communication: A small technical change would be the rendering of election emails in plain text format without the inclusion of logos, pictures, banners etc. The use of logos, graphics and so on in emails is attractive when they are created, but they frequently do not download effectively on many devices and email platforms. In addition, many email programmes will obscure images and banners unless users explicitly request that they are made visible. A short, simple, plain text reminder will often be more effective.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- 1) Remove the rule preventing supporters from cooperating, as long as there is no concerted effort by candidates or slates to encourage cross-slating then this should not be a problem.

- 2) Reduce the number of hustings to around 5.
- 3) Clarify rules around Facebook, perhaps following the recommendations given to candidates in appendix 1.
- 4) Consider the style of hustings.
- 5) Exclude PTE candidates from hustings unless specifically requested by common rooms.
- 6) Introduce the £300 of financial support at the start of the campaign, impress upon candidates the fact that it is only for those in genuine need.
- 7) Send out elections communication to all students in plain text emails, without banners, logos, pictures or any forms of graphics. This makes it far clearer and increases the chance that the information will be digested.

In general the elections appeared to be achieved with the minimum of fuss and few serious problems. The candidates and elections committee, along with the permanent OUSU staff are to be commended for this. On a personal note, I thoroughly enjoyed being involved and believe that those elected will help to change the life of the students of the University for the better.

Matthew Collyer (New College)

Returning Officer MT 2015

Appendices

Appendix 1: Advice to Candidates Given at Briefing Meetings

Candidate Briefings – Saturday 7th, Sunday 8th, Monday 9th November 2015

This briefing does not have precedence over the regulations binding candidates and election officials, where there is a clash the regulations have priority.

Governing Duty: (reg. 2.2) to act so as to ensure that the Direct Election is fairly and properly conducted.

Campaign dates: (see list)

Campaign Spending: (reg. 26)

Independents - £135 maximum for sabs., £55 for all other positions

Slates – Where you have a sab. Candidate £135 plus £10 for each additional sab. And £5 for each candidate for any other office.

Where you don't have a sab. Candidate, £55 plus £5 for each additional candidate.

You may not spend any more than this on (reg. 26.3) promoting a candidate or slate or otherwise aiding your campaign. You must not procure this material for less than any student member would be able to do so. Members of a slate are jointly accountable for their expenditure.

You must deliver all receipts for campaign spending to the returning officer at the OUSU offices within 45 minutes of the close of poll (i.e. Thursday of 6th at 6:45).

Deposits can be recovered from the OUSU offices following the poll. Candidates can recover their own deposits. Lead agents must recover slate deposits.

Directions: (read out) see nominations pack

Supporters, Agents and Cooperation:

Agents represent a candidate or slate. They may act only for one candidate or slate.

Supporters are people who support (whether in writing, orally, or otherwise) a candidate or slate. They can either be recognised “in good faith” (reg. 16) by you, or determined to be so by me. You are responsible for the performance of your supporters, agents, and agents of your slate.

You must not seek or claim endorsement from any OUSU employee (including sabs.), or an OUSU campaign other than CRAE, Disabled Students, International Students, LGBTQ, Studentsplus (mature students), or Womcam.

Co-operation is forbidden between slates. Liking a facebook post or page is fine, as long as a concerted campaign or joint association is not occurring. Sharing pages is not allowed. You are responsible for the actions of your slate;

Email Lists:

You must not make use of an excluded mailing list (reg. 25.1) this includes society lists, college lists, Oxford Union lists etc. (reg. 25.1)

Facebook groups:

We do not wish to set too many rules regarding campaigning, however if issues arise directions will be issued which must be complied with. The advice of the elections committee and myself is that you create groups and pages specifically for the election, and avoid using groups that already exist. Where these are used it should be the case that supporters of other campaigns have access to them.

Harassment:

We are bound at all times by the university’s policies on harassment.

6. A person subjects another to **harassment** where s/he [\[1\]](#) engages in unwanted and unwarranted conduct which has the purpose or effect of:

- violating another person’s dignity, or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for another person. [\[2\]](#)

The recipient does not need to have explicitly stated that the behaviour was unwanted.

7. Freedom of speech and academic freedom are protected by law though these rights must be exercised within the law. Vigorous academic debate will not amount to harassment when it is conducted respectfully and without violating the dignity of others or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Hustings length:

90 second opening speeches, the questions from the floor.

Hustings Timetable

Sunday 5th wk, 3pm – **Jesus** (all but Grads/Women)

Sunday 5th wk, 8.30pm – **Merton** (all but Grads)
Monday 5th wk, 6pm – **St Hugh's** (all but Grads)
Tuesday 5th week, 8pm – **Wadham SU** (all Sabbs)
Wednesday 5th wk, 4pm – **St Peter's** (all but Grads)
Wednesday 5th wk, 7pm – **Somerville** (all but Grads and C&C)
Wednesday 5th wk, 8.30pm – **St Catz** (all but Grads)
Thursday 5th wk, 5pm – **Hertford** (all but Grads)
Thursday 5TH WEEK, 7.30PM – CENTRAL HUSTINGS **Merton** (all)
Sunday 6th week, 9pm – **Pembroke** (all but Grads and C&C)

Complaints: (schedule 2)

All student members can make complaints. I have a responsibility to deal with the complaint promptly and fairly. Complaints must be made in writing, in English (primarily), include your full name and college, describe the circumstances of the complaints, and include a full description of an allegation if you are asserting non compliance with regulations, or an electoral offence). Up to 90 minutes after close of poll (for most complaints see schedule 2 13 for special circumstances).

I must provide the complaint to a person against whom an allegation is made, including the name of the complainant etc. Representations must be made within 18 hours of my request (and I must invite them), unless there is a matter of great urgency.

If there is a conflict of interest I will refer it to the junior tribunal.

Decisions from us will be sent to all people involved, the OUSU office, and the President who must publish it.

Appeals go to the Junior Tribunal, and then to the Senior Tribunal (the university)

Election Offences:

- (schedule 2, 1) a) unlawful, false or misleading statements in connections with the Direct Election.
- b) Harassment under university statute XI
- c) Obstructing or impeding any person performing electoral functions
- d) Cooperation (including between two candidates not on the same slate)
- e) Exceeding expenditure limits
- f) Receipts not being submitted
- j) mailing lists

Candidates commit offences when they (or their agents or supporters) fail to comply with the above rules. Or intentionally disregard a ruling from the RO, or fail to comply with an order from the RO.