



## termly reports to council hilary 2006

**Emma Norris**

**President**

### **Student contracts**

By far the most significant issue of term, student contracts came to a head shortly after Balliol JCR passed a copy onto the student union. Since then we have benefited from wide press coverage, forcing discussion between students and staff about the validity of a contract, especially the one we have been presented with. As it stands, almost all colleges have delayed (or in the case of one or two, rejected) the contract. The student union has drawn up changes to the proposed contract which provide minimums in accommodation and teaching, and also commit colleges to consulting students over changes in fees and charges. However it seems that Conference of Colleges (the collective body of colleges) will not discuss these changes, and will instead leave them to the governing bodies of individual colleges. Going beyond this, common rooms have begun to discuss the 'student charter', both the model format provided by the student union and the St Hugh's student charter, which set out the minimum rights of students. The incorporation of a charter into either college handbooks, the college contract, or indeed the University contract, would leave students in a far stronger position than they have been previously.

### **NUS**

Another pressing issue. Moves towards central affiliation are well underway, with many common rooms having passed motions supporting central affiliation. A cross-campus referendum was supposed to take place this term, but it seemed more appropriate to let individual common rooms discuss central affiliation before moving to a central vote. Once all interested common rooms have indicated their willingness (or not) to affiliate centrally, we will hold a central referendum. The deadline for the central referendum is early May, although we should hold it as near to the start of term as possible to maximise finalist turnout.

NUS Annual Conference is coming up (28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> March), and all affiliated common rooms are entitled to send one delegate free of charge. All affiliated common rooms have received a green registration form from the NUS, which most have since returned. Could all those who have not yet done this get in touch with me as soon as possible. The Oxford delegation to Annual Conference will, as far as possible, travel from Oxford to Blackpool (the glamorous location) together during the Easter break.

### **Socially Responsible Investment**

The student union and SRI campaign's paper outlining the possibilities of Socially Responsible Investment for the University will be discussed at University Council in 1<sup>st</sup> week next term. This issue has generated a lot of discussion this term; 4000 students have signed a petition asking the University to invest ethically, and many more have become aware of this discussion through press coverage outlining the extent of the University's unethical investment, and dissatisfaction with student - University communication. The latter problem has hopefully been resolved now, and I encourage everyone to get in touch with me or Richard Ollerhead (Balliol) to get involved.

### **Living Wage Campaign**

Unfortunately this campaign has been quiet this term, mainly because the above have taken up so much time. However, we had a meeting last week, agreeing short-term and long-term goals. Whilst the longest-term goal is to secure a living wage for all University/college staff, we aim to secure stronger support from common rooms, and begin conversation "training" with the help of Oxford Muse next term. Our Freedom of Information requests, asking for wage levels, proportion of outsourcing and so on, have had a mixed response. The first round of requests received a blanket refusal, but we have subsequently had reasonable information from a minority of colleges.

### **Rent Negotiations**

This is looking to next term. Negotiations will begin in Trinity for almost all common rooms not tied into multi-year deals. Van Noorden (the supposed 'Oxford' inflation rate) has been set, although the figure has not been made public yet, it will be as usual around 5%. I have already heard of a number of common rooms looking at potential rises over 10%. This underlines the need for a central campaign in Trinity term. Early next term there will be a meeting for all common room representatives with responsibility for rent negotiations, aiming to provide negotiation training and information sharing.

**Chris Allan**

**V-P (Finance)**

### **Finance**

As you can see from the Amended Budget, OUSU's finances are looking much healthier than previously anticipated. This is mainly a result of expenditure cuts, although the Business Manager should be congratulated for raising more OSSL income than estimated, with one of the most successful Hilary terms on record. The review of our financial systems is progressing, with the ongoing support of the University. I hope to be able to present this report to Council at some point next term.

### **Radio and OxStu**

Oxide radio has continued to broadcast online this term, via [www.oxideradio.co.uk](http://www.oxideradio.co.uk). As reported in the OxStu, it has faced a few IT problems that have meant that it has been repeatedly blocked from the network; we are working to resolve these and I'm confident we can stop it happening in the future. The OxStu has been very successful both editorially and commercially this term, thanks to all involved for their hard work.

### **Website**

I'm painfully aware of the current problems with the OUSU website, and the consensus seems to be that we should take it down and start from scratch. A long term contract has limited our options to date, but we will have a new and better website by the beginning of next year, which is likely to raise more money than we are currently receiving for advertising. In the mean time the current site will continue to be updated, and should contain all the information you need (even if it is hard to find....)

### **Zoo**

Zoo has been very profitable this term, and all of our events have been popular. Lookout for a similar line-up next term, and make sure your entz reps get in touch with [madz@zoozoo.org](mailto:madz@zoozoo.org) to organise bops etc during the exam season

**Aidan Randle-Conde**

**Vice-President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities)**

Once again it's 7<sup>th</sup> week. That means termly reports.

### **Accommodation Office**

I've been working with the Accommodation Office a lot this term. The details are in the Accommodation Committee's report. I'd like to add here that the Accommodation Officer was invited to the Committee for Student Health and Welfare to talk on accommodation matters. This has hopefully given some insight as to how accommodation can affect students' quality of life and impact on them both socially and financially.

### **Condom machines**

Condom machines have all been delivered now, with some new ones being ordered since. There have been a few problems here and there and I've tried to sort these out when I can. The new supply of condoms has been introduced without much hassle and thanks go out to everyone involved for keepings things as trouble free as possible. I've spoken to Sam Roe from Intelligent Vending many times and met up with him when he visited Oxford last week. I'm really quite pleased with the service that Intelligent Vending offer and am happy to help any Common Room with any other orders for machines. St Hilda's JCR are currently looking into getting a tampon machine, for example.

### **Welfare Resources Team**

With the introduction condom machine condoms and pregnancy tests I felt it was time to update the welfare resources. The (rather grand) title of Welfare Resources Team refers to myself and Ellie, the VP (Women) who oversee welfare resources, and the Office Staff who sort out the supply and distribution of the resources. The credit really goes out to Gill and Maria who work tirelessly to make sure that Common Rooms can get their condoms, lube, dental dams, attack alarms and pregnancy tests.

Please remember to bring payment with you, or send it in advance.

### **Publications Review**

I have, as mandated by the Executive and Council, performed the publications review to work out where we can save money. All of the suggestions thus far have been about the publications that break even or make a loss. Commercial publications are a different kettle of fish. If you have any concerns you'd like to raise then please let me know and Alice Wilby and I will bring motions next term.

### **Welfare publications**

I've done my best to get welfare publications out there to people this term. Paper copies were delivered at the start of term. Publications Request Forms have gone out to all the Common Rooms. Electronic copies are being put online and this will continue into the vacation (go to [users.ox.ac.uk/~ousuwlf](http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ousuwlf) for the Welfare Handbook and Living Out Guide.)

### **Student Advice Service**

The Student Advice Service is still receiving and dealing with casework. This term appears to have been less busy than last term, but there is still a steady flow of issues and problems that we can help with.

### **Committee for Student Health and Welfare**

The Committee met again this term. The issues raised were mainly concerned with the Counselling Service (which has finally received a pledge of funds that can help with a long-term strategy), the potential closure of the Barnes Unit, the flu pandemic planning strategy group and the introduction of pregnancy tests to OUSU's stock of resources. One of the College Doctor's had a problem with pregnancy tests in Common Rooms. I don't know why.

### **Annual meeting of College Doctors**

The College Doctors met again this term. They only do it once a year and it's usually quite fun. Once again the Barnes Unit was discussed, the Counselling Service waiting times were discussed, the flu pandemic planning strategy group was discussed and medical certificates were also discussed.

I raised objections that Senior Tutors should have to "filter" out trivial requests for medical certificates for exams on the grounds that this could lead to varying standards of triviality across the colleges. This point was taken on board and Senior Tutors, if they are expected to filter out trivial requests, will be given some guidance in doing so and students will still be able to consult College Doctors even without the Senior Tutors' permission. This should reduce paperwork and the amount of time College Doctors spend writing notes, without sacrificing any students' actual medical needs during exams.

### **Meeting with the Proctors**

The meeting with the Proctors was productive, with an agenda that covered all sorts of issues, from sub-fusc to animal rights protests. Once again the point about medical certificates was raised and seemed to be well received.

### **Joint Committee for Health and Safety**

I attended a meeting with the Health and Safety group, which was very productive. For the first time the Graduate Representative for the Committee for Student Health and Welfare, Laura Gilbert, attended. As both she and I are scientists we were able to comment on many areas of lab safety which tend to get overlooked. I would like there to be permanent representation of at least one science student on the committee and the committee seem keen on the idea. I also want to contact JCC reps across the University to see how effective the health and safety literature is for students.

Attention was drawn to the noise at work paper, pointing out the working conditions in the Physics lab. Attention was also drawn to the notice for pregnant and breast-feeding women working with radioactive materials, asking that confidentiality be maintained and such matters handled with sensitivity.

### **Close Campsfield**

Close Campsfield have met nearly every week in OUSU and although I haven't been able to make every meeting I've attended those that I can. I haven't found time to get the society properly registered yet, but will do as soon as I can. There seems to be a lot of momentum developing now, with many resources at Close Campsfield's

disposal and the bank account reactivated. Next term we should see a termcard of events for Close Campsfield. Watch this space for more details.

### **Rough Guide to Equal Opportunities**

Alas this is still not complete. Whether it's InDesign crashing, emergency casework or being ill the Rough Guide seems to get pushed further and further back. Apologies for this. I'll get it done for the start of next term, I promise.

### **Photocopiers, publications and all the rest**

This term I've moved the offices around again to make space for a reprographics suite. This ensures that people can have access to a tidy working space for photocopying and getting their hands on useful publications. It's really shiny and everyone who has mentioned it seems impressed. We also have a new photocopier. It's great.

### **LGBSoc**

LGBSoc have had 7 main drinks events so far this term and I've attended and helped at every one. LGBSoc are great and it's nice to get involved in a society that really makes a difference. They also give me free drinks each week, which is awesome.

### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

Holocaust Memorial Day was a bit odd this year. It stretched out to 6 events over about as many days. The Ceremony itself was at lunchtime and the attendance may well have suffered because of this. Thanks to all those involved- it was all okay in the end (even though the fire alarm was set off!)

### **Pancakes**

As this Tuesday was shrove Tuesday and the Executive mandated me to take part in a community pancake race I took part in a community pancake race. The OUSU men's team came 4<sup>th</sup> out of 5. It could have been worse. Pancakes are delicious.

### **Thanks**

Thanks go out to so many people:

Emma, for being a voice of reason when things get tough  
Chris, for balancing the books all term  
Ellie, for all sorts of stuff really, but mainly for help with the pregnancy tests  
Ollie, for stepping in when I had to take a few days off  
Charlyne, for managing the academic arm of the Student Advice Service so expertly  
Hannah, for pancake hilarity and speed Exec meetings  
Charlie, for all his work with Queer Rights  
Alice, for ranting about publications with me  
Iain, for continued support with both Health and Welfare and on a personal level  
Jenny, you're great and you know it. You always manage to cheer me up  
Rob R, for your enthusiasm in Close Campsfield  
Rob V, mainly for laughs and stuff. You're a funny guy  
Gill, for help with so much. Condoms, publications, admin, sanity.  
Maria, for much of the same and more. You can see the fear in my face when things go pear-shaped. You know what it's like, you've seen it before, you know it's just OUSU and that one day it will stop

There are probably many more people to thank whom I've forgotten. Sorry about that.

And finally...

It seems something of an OUSU tradition for sabs to use the 7<sup>th</sup> Week Trinity report to say what they think is wrong with OUSU, before riding off into the sunset. I think it's much more useful (and accountable) to do this before the year ends, so I'm going to spend a few paragraphs outlining what I think needs to change. If you agree then please get in touch and we can bring motions. I won't say everything here, but I'll make a start.

These are my opinions. They are not endorsed by Council in any way. Do not attempt to hold me accountable for personal views on OUSU. Do feel free to mandate me to do things in motions though.

Firstly the job of Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) needs to change. It's too big and there is no innate connection between welfare and equal opportunities. We need to go back to having a VP (Welfare) and work something else out for equal opportunities. Let's not forget that the VP (Women) and VP (Graduates) between them deal with half the equal opportunities campaigns. The current system can make it look like they're my lackeys and they are not. I do not delegate any equal opportunities work to either role so it's misleading to assume that the VP (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) has any special claim to equal opportunities. Let's shift the emphasis where it belongs. The VP (Welfare) should have clearly defined limits of responsibility and the equal opportunities roles of Officers should be explicit.

Massive sweeping changes to the Constitution and Standing Orders are sometimes required and can breathe new life into OUSU. However we need to remember that the place for consultation is OUSU Council and only OUSU Council. Anything else is no better than chatting to mates in a pub. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't consult outside of Council before submitting motions of course, but it does mean that any "consulting" outside of Council should only be in order to ensure that a particular change has more support than it would otherwise. OUSU Council is where we change minds and anything else is simply not an accountable method of discussion.

The Part-time Executive reforms are a good thing. So too are changes that make the responsibilities and duties of the Executive easier to understand and pin down. I'd like to see even more go into the Executive section of the Constitution and Standing Orders.

Sabbatical Officers and Part-time Executive Officers are different and if they are to be equal then this is fine, but it means that the Executive cannot line-manage or mandate each other. If the Part-time Executive Officers and Sabbatical Officers have equal say in an Executive meeting and Council then they must reconcile this in some way with the very different roles they fulfil outside of these settings.

Co-Chairs need more support. They need to know exactly what resources they have at their disposal, a brief outline of the structures of OUSU, how to change policy and what is expected of them. I'll be looking to provide written guidance for my Co-Chairs this vacation, but OUSU as a whole needs to take responsibility.

The OUSU website is not nice to look at. It is relatively easy to manage, which is good, but it needs to change, and I'm glad that it will do so soon.

The equal opportunities campaigns need to stay separate if they are to be effective. Queer Rights and Anti-Racism shouldn't have to consult every time either of them wants to form policy. There are groups in the campaigns themselves that get underrepresented (eg the trans community in Queer Rights.) This will get worse if there is any amalgamation. Equal opportunities lobbyists are not one homogenous mass. They all have different aims and methods, so there is no "one size fits all" model that they can all work to. They need to be able to conflict. I have more objections. I'll raise them if the debate comes around again.

The building needs to be clean and accessible at all times. If this means that the General Manager should have responsibility and a budget to do so then that is what must happen. We cannot leave the day-to-day running of the building in the hands of annually elected officers. It just doesn't work.

The Oxford Student newspaper causes problems for the OUSU Sabbatical Team. This is not news, nor is it a secret. I have done my best to work with both papers so far and will continue to work with them as best I can. However, they will always be at arms-length as it doesn't help either the Sabbatical Team or the Editorial Team to get caught in some strange embrace. I will say this though: Editorial independence should not extend as far as violation of the Proctors' code. As soon as the VP (Finance) is asked to publish something that would constitute a sending-down then we have a very serious problem. There needs to be a get-out clause somewhere, or else there will be trouble. (I don't care too much about being slagged off in the paper, as that happens with both papers and we should expect nothing more. Until I become an editor I doubt that will ever change.)

Finally, about structure in general... I remember working on the Divisional Board as the Undergraduate Rep and finding little structure in the way of JCC reps. This needs to change. We need to have the details of key officers

somewhere central. I'm going to attempt that with the welfare providers in OUSU. Once we have this information we can actually organise ourselves into a more flexible and reactive body. However, I do get the feeling that has been attempted in the past, many many times.

Ask questions and stuff. Otherwise I'll see you next term!

<b>Ellie Cumbo</b>	<b>V-P (Women)</b>
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Did you know that the French for "bullet points" is impossible to find on the internet ? Anyway, this term, I have:

- 1) Produced a sell-out production of the Vagina Monologues as part of the V-Day College Campaign 2006. This has raised a significant amount for the Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre; which I hope to disclose at a later date.
- 2) Held a Sex Trafficking Forum and a Pro-Choice Forum jointly with the Labour Club. Many thanks to Kate Ferguson for the idea and subsequent enthusiasm.
- 3) Encouraged colleges to hold self-defence classes open to members of other colleges too. OUSU used to provide these, but Bex found that the OUSU offices were an unsuitable venue. I hope more sessions will take place next term and I would like to be able to publicise them to all JCRs and MCRs.
- 4) Brought the Finals Gap Survey results to Senior Tutors' Committee, asking them to take note of the students' responses, and also to seek student views more extensively when conducting further research into this issue. Charlyne and I have been working with the Oxford Learning Institute, who produce the Oxford Course Experience Questionnaire sent out to all Finalists in their last term, to add questions relating to the Finals Gap. I will report back on this when it comes to fruition.
- 5) With Aidan, produced a Safety Pamphlet for Welfare/Women's Officers to distribute to their CRs, giving basic safety advice, including a section on drink spiking, and giving space for college-specific information to be filled in.
- 6) Sought a central list of student parents from the university, with the aim of allowing OUSU, and the University itself, to target more services specifically at those in need of them. JCC have indicated that they will bring my request to Conference of Colleges and I look forward to hearing what happens next.
- 7) Worked to promote the University's Childminder Network to student parents, including a drop-in session on Wednesday of 7<sup>th</sup> Week. I encouraged the Network Co-ordinator and the University Childcare Officer to hold this event in a college, rather than in the Ashmolean, in order to offer a more welcoming and familiar environment to students. The event was very well-attended and we hope to hold another in a few months' time.
- 8) With Charlyne, organised and conducted the Target Schools Women's Open Day on Monday of 7<sup>th</sup> Week as part of our drive to open Oxford up to women. Around 50 women attended, and we have had very pleasing feedback already.
- 9) Provided five Women's Finals Forums, to be held in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Week. The History Forum had to be cancelled owing to unforeseen circumstances affecting the tutor, but we hope to reschedule it for next week or the beginning of next term at the latest. I have also been emailed by several women requesting a Forum in Law, a prospect I am currently looking into. Many thanks to Maria Koryakina for her considerable help with this.
- 10) Begun making arrangements to hold a Heads of State Party with Oxford Women in Politics to mark International Women's Day (8<sup>th</sup> March, Wednesday of 8<sup>th</sup> Week). I am currently trying to negotiate a discount/free entry for Women's Officers and their guests.
- 11) Started the process of reinvigorating Pro-Choice Campaign, beginning with letters to Dr Evan Harris MP (Oxford West and Abingdon) and Andrew Smith MP (Oxford East) outlining the pro-choice policy of this student union. We also hope to hold a factual debate on the issue at the beginning of next term.
- 12) Supported the St Hilda's JCR Women's Officer with her petition for more lamp-posts on Cowley Place. My letter to the OxStu on the subject was read by Councillor Craig Simmons, who has expressed his willingness to address our concerns as soon as the petition is closed. The address is <http://new.PetitionOnline.com/ILoCP/petition.html> and we would be very grateful for more signatures.

I am currently creating a mailing list solely for Women's Officers which I hope will make Women's Campaign more efficient.

<b>Oliver Russell</b>	<b>V-P (Graduates)</b>
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My report this term is based on my job description

([http://www.ousu.org/main/yourunion/rules/standingorders/job\\_descriptions/vp\\_graduates](http://www.ousu.org/main/yourunion/rules/standingorders/job_descriptions/vp_graduates))

I have campaigned on issues of particular relevance of postgraduates, in conjunction with relevant OUSU and University committees. These have included the motions from PGA which are on the 7th week agenda, the formation of an OUSU Graduate Academic Affairs Committee and the successful lobby of the Curators of the University Libraries concerning opening hours in 0th Week of next term (please go on Monday 17th April, otherwise we will all look silly for suggesting that students wanted to use the libraries then)

I have liased with and represented OUSU and its postgraduate members to committees of the University and external groups. These have largely been University Council (principally supporting Emma in her SRI campaign) Educational and Policy Standards Committee (embedding graduate studies at the core of the collegiate university = many more scholarships) and the Graduate Panel of the Conference of Colleges (opposing continuation fees and looking towards incorporating a college student charter for graduates)

I have overseen the activities of PGA and the MCR Presidents' Committee. This has involved a highly successful termly meeting of the former and two wonderful dinners provided by the latter .My termly report of PGA is the content of the ratifications on the 7th Week Agenda.

No publications focussing on graduate concerns have been edited by me this term, though I am in discussions with the ISC and the business manager regarding and International Students' Handbook.

Thus far this year I have failed to provide an annual training session, in co-operation with the Staff Development Officer for MCR officers, Junior Deans etc. This is an element of my job description that could be usefully reviewed.

I have served as a University Harassment Officer, but as yet have not been offered specific training in this role.

I have served on the management committee of the University Club. We have this term continued to come to terms with our financial crisis and have steadfastly refused to admit undergraduates. The precise terms of entry for mature students and 4th year undergraduates (science vs artists) are being codified.

**Charlyne Pullen**

**V-P (Access & Academic Affairs)**

**Hannah Stoddart**

**V-P (Charities and Community)**

**Rob Vance**

**Business Manager**

Firstly, my hearty congratulations go to Tom Wrathmell who we appointed as my successor this week, he is an excellent choice and I a sure will prove more than able to continue the good work I believe we have done this year.

The term has been fairly stressful, for perhaps understandable reasons but fortunately due to the hard work of Chris, the Vice-President Finance a lot of ground has been covered. I have spent some of my time supporting his efforts to reconcile budgets, and for the rest: selling adverts, developing new opportunities and chasing up money owed, both from last term and from further back.

The OxStu has been commercially extremely successful, and whilst for obvious reasons I am reluctant to exaggerate has made more money than expected. A big thanks goes out to all the journalists on the paper who work extremely hard.

A lot of ground has been made in new areas – I have been meeting with the careers service and we are going into a form of partnership aiming to release the full potential of working together on careers fairs and marketing graduate recruitment in general. In the first instance we will bring our promotion and publications experience to their fairs, publishing their guide to the fair. They will work with us to promote Refresh which was such a huge

success, earlier this year and thirdly we will be working together further on the content of the newly updated Oxbridge careers website that is being developed at the moment in partnership with CUSU. All this ground work should prove to be profitable as we expand the base on which OSSSL operates as the leading graduate recruitment consultant for Oxford University, providing services to its members and raising funds for OUSU.

We organised a very successful Champagne tasting event with JCR Presidents. Hopefully we will be able to role out college champagne for finals and graduation through them, making money for our constituent members. The question of college stash is also to be revisited possibly through the new OUSU site, as is the idea of centrally syndicating adverts for college websites and clubs and societies. All of these ideas are in the pipeline, with idea being to make money for constituent common rooms, taking advantage of our returns to scale. Anyone with any other ideas in this area should definitely get in touch.

We are currently looking for people to work our successors over the summer, on the three big summer publications, on the business team and on the freshers' fair team. It should be an exciting, dynamic and profitable team and certainly one that I enjoyed working on immensely, giving you ideal experience for all sorts of opportunities in the future, I would encourage lots of people to consider applying.

<b>Madhvi Pankhania</b>	<b>Entz Manager</b>
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<b>Jess Cordingly</b>	<b>Exec</b>
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This has been my first term on OUSU part-time exec and as such I have spent a lot of the term simply trying to get my head round my portfolios. I have been responsible for two particular areas: Target Schools and undergraduate academic affairs.

At the moment the Target Schools team are busy preparing for our annual regional conferences, which will take place during the 9<sup>th</sup> Week of this term. This year we'll be returning to Northern Ireland, holding conferences at sixth forms in Belfast, Londonderry and Enniskillen. We're also organising for the first time a conference to take place in East Anglia (big up the Norfolk massive!). As well as regional conferences, the co-chairs are in the process of organising an Aspirations Day in association with Brookes, which will take place during Trinity Term. We've also been working with the VP Women to help co-ordinate a Women's Open Day. This took place on Monday and I had a fun afternoon dodging certain political issues whilst trying to show a group of girls round the science area.

The other main issue that's been preoccupying the Target Schools team this term has been the report made by the university's working party for admissions. Several meetings were spent discussing potential changes to the Oxford Admissions system, with the general consensus being that there is a definite need for a more centralised system and the VP AccAcAff designed a motion for Council accordingly. I personally was a bit disappointed by some of the changes made to the motion in Council, however I was really pleased that an extraordinary meeting of Council was called as there is no doubt in my mind that this is an issue of massive importance to all future applicants and students of this university.

AcAff stuff this term has been mainly focussed on updating old maillists and trying to locate the hidden JCR AcAff reps! With several lovely new co-chairs this process should be much speeded up now. In meetings we've been discussing the issue of student contracts and have been trying to get some feedback from students about what they want from a contract – follow the link on the main page of the OUSU website if you want to see more about the contract (or the admissions reform for that matter). Charlyne's made a funky survey on college inequality, which has been handed over to JCR reps. Get filling them in people! Academic affairs *can* be fun!

<b>Jennifer Small</b>	<b>Exec</b>
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Anti-Racism: We are still trying to organise both an Anti-Racism open day for prospective students from underrepresented minorities in Oxford as well as a general anti-Racism day to get people from different societies together. Also in the pipeline is an alliance with Unite Against Fascism for which we shall hopefully have a large rally next term when the weather improves.

SRI: Although the university bizarrely took the paper off the agenda for this term the demonstration outside University Council to protest against this was a great success with approximately 30 people in attendance and front page coverage in the Oxford Student. The campaign is now focused on targeting alumni and local councillors to see who we can get to support the campaign and the paper in particular.

**Sau Wai Law****Exec**

After being elected as a Part Time Executive Officer, I have devoted myself almost entirely to international students issues.. Together with the Vice President (Graduates), we have set up and re-initiated the International students committee, which aims to bring cohesion between collegiate university and international students' bodies by promoting Academic, cultural and social welfare and representing international students at union level. ISC consists of two Co-Chairs and 7 Committee members from different countries. We are not building an international club in OUSU, but strive to become a bridge to ensure involvement from international students.

Last Term

1. We built up a vast net of contact list and formed our structure.
2. We have started by continuing our lobby against the Visa issue (mentioned below) and made a trip to visit our MP's in mid-November. We also expressed concern over the application fee for international students to visit a Host Family through a charity organisation

**Sarah Hutchinson****Exec**

For me, this term has mostly been about getting to grips with OUSU and the way things are done. I knew nothing about its structure coming in, or about the people involved, and as a graduate in a graduate college had even been insulated from JCR politics, so it has been quite a steep learning curve for me. For this reason it's been a relatively quiet, although interesting term for me. However, this experience has highlighted a couple of issues that I feel are important to raise, although I am aware that to an extent they are already recognised as issues that need to be addressed.

The first is the website, which I know is only partially under Exec control and will be altered once the contract is up. I found it very difficult to access information about the constitution, how committees work, and what OUSU provides for students when I was considering running for election. It is also disappointing that things such as committee meeting times (and places, even if they are always in the OUSU offices) are not more clearly advertised so people can become aware of how they can get involved.

The second issue is more generally communication. As someone who was new to Oxford and hadn't been involved in student politics for several years I have felt it quite difficult to get information and exchange ideas without the networks that others on Exec have. In particular I have been quite surprised and frustrated that emails are often left unacknowledged, even when they are checking where a meeting is to be held, whether something has been received or offering suggestions for ways that problems can be resolved. This is extremely frustrating and alienating, and has definitely affected my input as it is difficult to motivate yourself to ask questions and make suggestions if they constantly disappear into the background. Lack of information about meetings that I am required to attend also has the effect of making turning up unnecessarily complicated.

Internal communication is key to the effective functioning of an institution as it ensures that representatives are well informed and encourages team-working. Equally effective external communication is vital to ensure credibility and involvement. It would be great if there were more direct communication with students, as my MCR literally provides no information about OUSU elections, services etc. As this seems typical of graduate colleges hundreds of graduates may be simply excluded and distanced from the rest of the University. This is not the result of a problem with OUSU, but something that OUSU could perhaps be proactive on. It is also something that I intend to work on next term within my own college and begin to network into other colleges.

With regard to my portfolio, it has been a slow term, as it took some time to get a date when we could all meet. However, our first Pro Choice meeting has been very fruitful, generating lots of action points. The aim is to launch a major campaign next term, hopefully with a debate to be held in 2<sup>nd</sup> week for which we will be arranging speakers and publicity over the next few weeks.

**Rob Robinson****Exec**

I've been working on four things this term: Target Schools, the Socially Responsible Investment Campaign, college coordination, and OUSU's priority campaign to close the Campsfield detention centre.

Target Schools has gone well, and we are all very excited about our imminent regional open days. Over the vacation we are trying to get people to go and talk to schools in their areas about Oxford – please encourage people to volunteer. See Jess's report for more details!

The SRI campaign picked up a lot of momentum this term, culminating in the big demonstration in 5<sup>th</sup> week. The campaign has a strong activist base which will be important in the coming months while we undertake a lower-profile but equally active campaign of lobbying academics and alumni.

I took on college coordination because it sounded like one route to improving OUSU's profile at the college level. Maja and I have designed some new high-impact posters to be on a wall near you soon, and are collating college-specific information to enhance the lines of communication between common rooms and OUSU. We'll be emailing JCR and MCR presidents to get contact details of everyone on their execs, so that we don't have to email presidents all the time. In preparation for next term's rent negotiations, I'll be gathering information about rent-rises so that we can act collectively to protect those facing the largest increases.

Finally, the (relatively) recently formed Oxford Students to Close Campsfield has really flourished this term. We have well-attended weekly meetings, and are moving forward to develop a coherent campaigning strategy for next term. This term we have worked closely with the Oxford resident's Campaign to Close Campsfield, going on their monthly demonstrations, and holding stalls on Cornmarket to get petitions signed, raise awareness about the detention centre and wider refugee issues, and encourage people to get involved in the campaign. Student Action for Refugees (STAR) Oxford has also been visiting detainees on a regular basis, running workshops to provide them with some human contact and something different to do.

I've really enjoyed by first term on exec – I even look forward to those Friday afternoons now!

<b>Iain Simpson</b>	<b>Exec</b>
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This term I've been going to RepCom as always, and managing to guess attendance completely wrong every time regarding how many agendas to print off in advance. Health and Welfare stuff has been shelved slightly in recent weeks, which isn't ideal, but the SI and suicide awareness Rough Guides continue their slow creeping journeys towards completion. Hopefully now looking at 1st week Trinity with those or thereabouts. Given that our website contract is due to expire within 6 months I haven't been tempted to redesign the website from scratch for that brief amount of time. Rather I've been trying to ensure important current stuff gets shoved up on the front page regularly. Next term I'm considering the idea of having some sort of 150 word summary of what's been going on in OUSU that week/fortnight up there as well, just to help communication. Communication I think is probably the thing OUSU as an organisation needs to improve the most at the moment, suggestions on a postcard. Other more general exec stuff, I've been keeping minutes. So many minutes. In fact, some weeks I make it past 10,000 words. Designed the programme for the Vagina Monologues, which was excellent (the play that is). Myself and the illustrious VP (notreallyagraduate) have looking through the vast standing orders and trying to work out what needs tweaking next, we'll probably take something to council in Trinity. Non-OUSU related activities have been keeping me busy for the last month or so as I spoke to Newsnight for the first time since the summer yesterday, but hopefully I've still managed to get some stuff done. All unfinished projects like handbooks etc should get done this vac.

<b>Accommodation Committee</b>
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The Accommodation Committee as such has not met this term. Despite some initial interest, nobody who seemed keen to become a Co-Chair actually stepped forward. It's unfortunate that Marco Biago, the Executive Officer for Accommodation had to leave part way through this term. I hope to see him in OUSU again. As a result the Accommodation Committee has consisted of the Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and for the most part this has worked.

The Living Out Guide was produced, with new content and it all fits into fewer pages than ever. The layout has been improved to make it as easy to read as possible. For the first year ever the Accommodation Office have advertised in the Guide, rather than putting their name on the cover. This means that the Living Out Guide is now fully independent of the University and no longer subject to the every wish of the Accommodation Office. This is of benefit to both OUSU and the Accommodation Office.

This year saw the Accommodation Office Housing Advice Surgery, for the first time ever. Students could visit the OUSU offices and get free advice about housing, as well as copies of the Living Out Guide, City Council Guide for Private Tenants and the University private housing list. There is no other service quite like this and I hope it continues.

As well as the Housing Advice Surgery, OUSU have been working with the Accommodation Office to secure some free legal advice for students with accommodation queries. We're currently looking into a web-cam setup so that students can get legal help from the OUSU offices, the Accommodation Office or perhaps even their own college. It's still early days.

In order to support the growing services that the Accommodation Office offer I think it will be necessary for the Accommodation Office to seek additional funding, and I will help this in any way that I can. I would also like to see the Accommodation Office move closer to the City Centre so that students can access the services more easily.

The Accommodation Committee really needs students' input. If you would like to get involved in something that impacts on the quality of life of so many students then please get in touch ([welfare@ousu.org](mailto:welfare@ousu.org) or (2)88461). With new laws coming into play, rents increasing further and the student contract stripping away our rights we need an active Accommodation Committee more than ever.

### **Dyslexia Network**

It has been another rather inactive term for the Dyslexia Network. Apologies for this. The network should be up and running again by the start of next term.

### **Disabilities Action Campaign**

This term, the Disabilities Action Committee has:

Continued its work on our Freedom of Information Act requests, with the goal of assembling the documents we've compiled in an OUSU-approved report by next term.

Made movements toward establishing a network among disabilities officers at Oxford Colleges that would facilitate their communication among each other and with university staff in the Disability Office.

Additionally, in the next term we'll make plans and notes for future Disabilities Action Campaign members.

### **Health and Welfare Committee**

Health and Welfare has had a mixed term so far. At the start of the term there was no Co-Chair, but since then Gina Hadley has been elected and we look forward to Sreeram's return. Health and Welfare will take off next term with plans to campaign against the closure of the Barnes Unit and for student finance. It will also be a time to look into the welfare structures in OUSU and the welfare services offered.

### **International Students Committee**

#### **Visa Seminar**

In 3rd Week, the ISC organized an International Visa Seminar attended by 200 students interested in finding out about UK and US visas. The speakers, lawyers from a London office specialising in immigration law, delivered a detailed presentation about various immigration schemes operating in the UK and the US followed by a questions session. The feedback from students has been very good, suggesting that similar events might be worth organizing on a regular (annual) basis.

#### **Visa Appeal Rights**

The lobby of Parliament over the proposed removal of the right to appeal for international student visas is looking very positive. Over 100 Lords received letters, where possible from members of their own college, and many indicated they would support us. The debate in the Lords was very much in our favour and the bill is now in committee stage where we hope the references to students will be watered down.

#### **Survey of International Students' Experience in Oxford**

It is expected that we will have drafted, reviewed and administered the survey by mid-Trinity term and from the results of this, we shall endeavour to plan and undertake more future activities and events that is will do more to promote the goals and objectives of this committee.

#### **International Student Handbook**

Next term the committee is planning to revise the International Student Handbook currently available on the ISC website. The ISC would also like to explore options of publishing a hard copy of the handbook.

#### **International Culture Festival**

The NUS International Culture Festival intends to promote inter-society networking and social cohesion. We are also seeking to strengthen our networking and contacts not only with student societies within the University but also other international student societies and committees at other UK universities, and miscellaneous student bodies at the national level.

#### **Smooth Transition**

We will make sure that ISC continues to exist after 05/06 academic year.

## **Pro-Choice Campaign**

The public discussion of and potential parliamentary challenges to the current 24 week legal limit on abortion has remained the most pressing issue for the Promoting Choice Campaign. This even became clear during the panel discussion organised in conjunction with Women's Campaign and OULC to consider the proposition that 'we should be discussing access not limits: legal, free abortion on demand'. As one speaker pointed out, whether we want the discussion or not, the time limit is where the pro-choice movement needs to be focussing its attention. However, the debate of the evening also made clear that this issue cannot be isolated from wider social attitudes towards sex and reproduction, more general attempts to displace the right of women to choose from the centre of abortion law and the need to campaign for local provision which meets the needs of women. It was an event which could not have been organised without the hard work of Kate Ferguson and particular thanks should go to her.

It was also an event which has set the agenda for the campaign's work next term. We've begun preparations for JCR motions and a letter writing campaign to make sure our local MP's understand OUSU is committed to an abortion law which protects the few women who need late abortion (for compelling reasons) and an abortion debate which is not controlled by sensationalist media coverage. Further, we hope to arrange a further event which will bring together a wide range of speakers to share their expertise on the current state of abortion provision, increasing the level of awareness of and information available on the issues here in Oxford.

If you would like to know more about any of the work discussed above, want to get involved or have further ideas for the campaign please get in touch ([claire.chalmers@univ.ox.ac.uk](mailto:claire.chalmers@univ.ox.ac.uk)).