

Reports to Council

Termly Council MT12

David J. Townsend

President

For more information, contact me at president@ousu.org or ask me a question in OUSU Council.

National Demonstration:

The National Demonstration against changes to the funding and regulation of tertiary education took place in London on 21 November. Common rooms decided through OUSU Council in 3rd Week that OUSU should officially support it and should provide coach transportation to Oxford students who were interested in attending (up to a maximum expenditure of £1000). Over 60 Oxford students attended on the OUSU coach, with OUSU's sabbatical officers and other volunteers organising the day and acting as stewards for the Oxford delegation. The weather on the day was quite inclement, but those taking part in the march did so with energy and enthusiasm. All our students made it back to Oxford happily on the evening, and the demonstration seems to have been well received by the broader community.

OUSU will be taking forward the 'local level' goals of the demonstration over the course of this year and will be collaborating with other student unions and the National Union of Students to take forward the 'national level' goals. If you're interested in being part of this, just get in contact with us.

Private Accommodation:

The hard work of OUSU in collaboration with common rooms, Colleges, the University, Brookes Student Union, Local Councillors and MPs is paying off. This year, the stampede to sign up early for next year's private accommodation has been avoided: there were no round-the-block lines outside North Oxford Property Services for days in advance of the release date, as has been the case in the past. Not only did we halt the trend of the last few years whereby the line was getting longer and longer and starting earlier and earlier, we actually reduced it to nearly zero.

This is a conspicuous achievement, but the success of the campaign depends on how we build on it. I strongly encourage anyone thinking of living in private accommodation to talk to your common room president (or me) about the situation first: there is no shortage of quality student accommodation in Oxford, the demand has been considerably reduced over the last few years by the building of hundreds and hundreds of new student rooms across the Collegiate University, and you'll be a better informed (and more empowered) customer if you wait until next term to sign up. Don't let hurry, mistake and regret mar your experience of living out in Oxford next academic year.

Movember:

Only a couple of days left to donate! Go to mobro.co.uk/mousu.

Hooroo,
DJT

Highlights

The last few weeks of term have been incredibly busy at OUSU, with the elections for next year's team and the NUS demonstration to organise. At the same time there have been a number of exciting developments in both our work for graduates, and the University's work on graduate issues we have raised in the past.

The biggest of these has been the production of a new report by Graduate Tutors' Committee that sets out the basic provision that colleges must offer to all students. For more detail on this and my other activities see below.

College Graduate Report

The Graduate Tutors Committee has passed a report produced with OUSU setting out the role of colleges in graduate education and, more importantly, identifying targets and areas with need of improvement. It has not been finalised but certainly sets a direction of travel which is very positive and which responds directly to a number of the issues raised by OUSU's PGT and PGR reports.

There are potentially a number of big wins contained here, including:

- A target that all colleges provide all first years with accommodation.
- A proposed framework for graduate teaching opportunities.
- An agreement that all colleges have a specific fundraising priority for graduate scholarships.
- The reconsideration and redesign of the college adviser system.

Teaching Opportunities Update

While the above report has given us another voice calling for more teaching opportunities for graduates there has been some push back by Senior Tutors in some colleges which is threatening to stall the Humanities Division initiative to create an assistantship scheme. The next stage is to work with MCR Presidents to demonstrate to Senior Tutors that this is an issue that remains important to their graduate students. I would also appreciate JCR support on this matter.

Fees

The University cycle for setting graduate and international student fees for 2014/15 has now begun and OUSU has already been heavily involved. The actual numbers being proposed are confidential at this point but with our Division Representatives have pushed for as low an inflationary uplift as possible and will now begin to work through the Divisions to ensure that any new income raised from students is spent on improved provision.

Other

I have been meeting Division Representatives individually and we have run two successful Division Rep Training sessions. I have also recruited successfully with the Development Office for our Graduate Fundraising Ambassador Scheme and we have 15 great postgraduate students ready to go in the New Year.

I have also helped Kirran, our Graduate Welfare Officer, organise a successful international students' brunch with around 60 attendees and our Mature Students' Officer, Leilei Huang, held a Mature Students' Social in 7th week with 15 attendees.

As always this is report records the news and highlights from my work over the last 3 weeks. If anyone has any questions about any of this or my other work then please do ask them in Council or email me (graduates@ousu.org).

Hi Council!

I hope you've all had a marvellous Michaelmas - I certainly have. Here's a rundown of the kinds of things I've been up to over the term...

Support

- Met up with 48 common room Welfare Officers to talk welfare in your colleges and how I can help.
- Ran training on handling Fresher's Week and supporting other students.
- Organised meetings for Welfare Officers to talk about events in their own common rooms and meet key players in University welfare (from the Student Advice Service and the Disability Advisory Service, this term).
- Helped out with a seminar for graduates on managing their supervisor relationship.
- Hosted a social event for students with children (and got to meet some *very* cute toddlers).

Representation

I sit on a bunch of groups and committees to represent students to the University. The most interesting ones are looking at how the University and Colleges should respond to the requirements of the Equality Act, both overall and particularly (in one working group) with regard to adjustments for disabled students.

Equality

I've had a term of really focusing on disability...

- I worked with the Disability Advisory Service to put on Disability Awareness Week, including hosting comedy from Abnormally Funny People and a panel discussion on the legacy of the Olympics.
- I secured funding for a new guide for disabled students.
- I've reinvigorated discussions about starting up a peer-mentoring scheme for disabled students.

Student Advice Service

- We're pretty busy this year, with almost 200 students already having contacted us for information and advice.
- I've been going out and spreading the word about what we can do by talking at colleges (e.g. presenting at welfare lunches) and to bits of the University like the Careers Service.
- I've also done quite a lot of backroom development on policy and procedure so that we can join an external network and acquire case management software. This would make the Student Advice Service a whole lot more efficient so we help more students in the future.

Two big things recently:

- Council voted to head to the NUS's National #demo2012, so off we went. I took a lead on the logistics of this, helping to ensure that we got our students there and back again without arrest, injury or hypothermia (which is a marvel, given the weather!)
- I'm bringing a paper to OUSU's Trustee Board this week to scope out whether we could run a pilot mediation scheme. This could be really beneficial to some of the students we see through the Student Advice Service, who aren't always well-served by the formal complaints procedures.

That's all, folks. As ever, send me an email on welfare@ousu.org if you've got any questions about this report or anything else.

Have a lovely Christmas and a good rest.

All the best,

Katie xxx

Happy Eighth Week! Since last time:

Exam Regulations Grey Book

Following Council's mandate, I have take this up with the University. The project to enhance the online version is in the pipeline, with a date within about two years. In the meantime, given that the current online version is up to date, albeit clunky in use, I have encouraged JCRs to follow Merton JCR's lead in asking their Colleges not to distribute copies to Freshers. Responses have been very good, with around half of JCRs motions, and several have already had their College agree not to circulate the Grey Book in Michaelmas 2013.

Student Representation in Departments & Faculties

This has been one of the big themes for this term, with Chris Gray and I looking to improve OUSU's connections with student departmental representatives, and secure the University's commitment to enhancing the JCC system. The paper brought forward by OUSU has cleared its latest committee hurdle and is heading out to the Divisions before returning to Education Committee.

NUS Demonstration

OUSU took part in the NUS Demonstration 'Demo 2012' last Wednesday, with just over 60 Oxford students braving the elements to make it down to London by coach, and all successfully made it back again!

Senior Tutors & Complaints and Appeals

The Student Advice Service's annual report raised concerns that the role of the Senior Tutor in exam complaints was interpreted differently across Colleges - a few seeing a 'gatekeeper' role for the Senior Tutor to decide whether or not a student can proceed to the Proctors. Following on from work from OUSU in Trinity, I've been speaking to Senior Tutors and Education Policy about this, with the aim of producing guidance from Education Committee and the Proctors.

Clubs and Society Access

This is an area OUSU worked on last year which I'm keen to continue, building on the involvement of student societies in the open days. A pilot school visit workshop with RAG was run in Trinity, with positive feedback from schools, and I'll be working with the new part-time executive to extend the initiative to more societies and colleges.

Bits and Pieces

Departmental Review number two (Statistics) has begun. I'm continuing to look into support for students on extended term 4th years, aiming for at least some guidance on available support. JCR Access Officer and JCR AcAffs have met, with some productive exchanges between Common Rooms, and the first Divcom of 2012/13 was held last Monday. The Sports strategic plan has headed through Education Committee - OUSU spoke to encourage its aim for minimum facility provision across all colleges.

Looking Ahead

Key areas of upcoming work include the experience of students on Joint Schools, Bursaries and Fee Waivers, and feedback from Mods and Prelims.

Have a great Christmas!

David

Hi Council,

This term has been busy and exciting with a lot of progress made on the various campaigns I've been working on and around £30,000 raised for charity! Before I report on the areas I've been working on I'd like to thank my outgoing part time exec officers, Beth Hanson-Jones and Oliver Gleeson, who have done sterling work over the last year. As we approach new exec inductions I look forward to working with James Fisher and Michael Davies over the rest of my year. Have a great Christmas and as ever feel free to contact me: charities@ousu.org

Charity

- The annual RAG Ball took place on Saturday to roaring success, despite the inclement weather. While we are still making the final calculations the ball has raised over £10,000. I'd like to thank the RAG Ball committee for all their hard work over the last 7 months.
- RAG: The Inter-Collegiate Mo-Off is still going strong with over £12,500 worth of donations! Over the last few weeks we've had a surge of registrations for Oxford jailbreak and I'm in the process of meeting online fundraising providers to secure the best deal. Our weekly club night at Bridge has also been going well.
- RAG in Hilary: Next term's events have been religiously planned and I've been meeting all the event groups individually to kick start their event organizing. Look forward to perennial favourites from Oxford's Got Talent, to Blind Date to larger fundraisers.

Community

- I've just recruited and appointed a new team of Community Wardens to start from January. They will be working in the Cowley Road area and in Jericho with the intention to foster a greater spirit of neighborliness and improve the relations between students and permanent residents.
- Planning for the Volunteering Showcase is ongoing and will take place next term. In the run up to this I helped the City Council organize their City Centre Area Forum which provided fertile ground for discussions around the relations in the city.
- I organized the first Oxford Student -Community Partnership Group for this term, a group which brings together various University, Council, resident and student stakeholders and developed an action plan to work on over the next year.
- I attended the Oxford City Council/University Liaison meeting to present on initiatives we're doing to encourage student-resident interactions.
- Work is still progressing, albeit slowly, on the idea to make sports grounds more accessible. I've been meeting the University's Widening Participation department and should be able to make good progress with this over the vac.

Living Wage

- Living Wage Week in 5th week went well with a combination of activities from speaking at a locally organized low pay debate, to doing a stunt with pledge cards to organizing a meeting for College campaigns. We've just elected a new exec and will be handing over this week. Will Brown, the Chair, and I will be meeting with the University again this week to lobby for a speedier response.

Other

- The last campaigns training session will be taking place on Wednesday at 6pm in OUSU and will be on negotiating and analyzing power. I will be evaluating the workshops and designing some follow up.
- The 3 campaigns of the Environment & Ethics Campaign have also been progressing well and planning has begun for Green Week, which will take place in 5th week of Hilary.
- I've met with representatives from the Proctors' Office to discuss their plan for dealing with post examination trashings this academic year.

Dear Friends,

It has been an incredible term and I cannot even believe it is already drawing to a close. Please find below some of the wins and accomplishments for the past term. I am looking forward to Hilary!

What I've done during Michaelmas Term concerning...

Sexual Abuse

- Rewrote the Sexual Consent Workshop material that was piloted last year. The *Consent is Sexy Campaign* in South Africa requested the material and disseminated it to multiple universities in the US and UK. Sexual Health Nurses in schools and the City of Oxford have also requested this material to adapt and use in their communities.
- Trained 51 students from 29 common rooms to facilitate Sexual Consent Workshops in their common rooms and sports teams.
- Ran facilitator debriefs to receive feedback and edited material.
- Created an End Sexual Violence Campaign that is taking the consent discussions out to the university and colleges as well as helping foster a grass roots movement in colleges to change harassment policies and challenge the victim blaming culture.
- Facilitated a Myth Busting discussion at Women's Campaign during the Gender Equality Festival.
- Organised and held a University Harassment Working group.
- Updated Love without Chains, A Guide to Surviving Domestic Abuse.

Student Parents

- Updated the Student Parent's Handbook.
- Held a Student Parent and Family Movie afternoon.
- Organised a Parent and Family Social at Exeter College.

Gender Gaps

- Worked toward closing gender gaps through planning and convening the International Gender Studies at Lady Margaret Hall's Michaelmas seminar series - 'Gender Gaps at Oxford: 800 years of ignoring women?'

Networking

- Held a social and networking event for the Women's Study Department.
- Organised a Graduate Women's Network and Social Event.

Women in Leadership

- Secured a graduate woman place on the Gender and Athena Swan University Committee.
- Spoke and co-hosted the OUSU and Oxford Union Society 'Can Oxford Women Have it All?'
- Updated the Women's Officer Handbook.
- Held a Women's Officer handover session.
- Planned the OUSU Women's Leadership Development Programme for Hilary Term.

Shout out...

This term's shout out goes to **Clara Ferreira** and **Sarah Pine**. They are the amazing, out going Graduate Women's Officer and Women's Campaign Officer. I am grateful for all your help, thoughts, advice, and encouragement. You are leaving your posts having made Oxford a better place for women. Thank you!

PART TIME OFFICERS

David Butler

Rent & Accommodation Officer

It has been a pleasure to serve my fellow students as Rent and Accommodation Officer.

Alongside Martha and David, I have achieved many wins;

- The living out guide has been revamped
- many colleges, with OUSU help, achieved below VNI (and sometimes below inflation)
- work has begun on a cost-of-living index
- the early lease campaign has continued to make positive progress

Will has all the experience and attributes to be an amazing officer and I am sure he shall achieve much more than I did.

Oliver Gleeson

Community & Charity Outreach Officer

Dear Council,

As a great year comes to an end I'd like to remind you all of some of the great things RAG has been up to and some of my key achievements

- Helped the City Council initiate their campaign to raise awareness of begging in Oxford
- Organised Oxford's Got Talent
- Helped to create the first ever Graduate RAG Reps meeting and forum
- Supported and strengthened the links with Ernst & Young, RAG's primary sponsor
- Supported RAG's efforts at many events including a Dodgeball Tournament, a stall at Summer Eights, Rag Does Comedy at the Union, many Megaraids to place like Bath and Bristol, raids in Oxford, many RAG Casino events, an E&Y Pub Quiz and of course RAG Ball!

I would like to say thank you to all the Sabs for their hard work and constant commitment. It makes the part time exec work much more efficiently and effectively when everyone works well together as a team. Specifically, I would like to thank Sarah Santhosham, and her predecessor Dan Stone, for all their hard work towards charitable activities in Oxford, their support and continued involvement with the RAG Exec and for ensuring that my year on Exec has been one of the most fun and most rewarding things I have done whilst at Oxford.

My successor, Michael Davies, will do a super job and I wish him the best of luck! I am sure he will be reporting back to you at the start of next term.

I can be contacted at communityandcharity@ousu.org and you can contact Michael at the same address after our handover.

It's been a great year!

Oliver

Kirran Bakhshi

Graduate Welfare Officer

This term my main activity was to initiate and host a brunch for international students, to get their opinions and point of view on their transition to Oxford student life. This included things such as how prepared they felt when they moved to Oxford, who gave them information before they arrived and how useful was this information, and the kinds of things that would have made their experience better.

Although my initial idea was for an intimate gathering for 10-20, we received RSVPs from over 100 people - this goes to show the level of enthusiasm that there is for an event of this kind, and really highlights the need for groups such as the International Students Campaign.

The event went really well. Main comments were as follows:

- Most people received information from the university before arriving. Some also received handbooks/guides from their common rooms. These were generally found to be more useful than the university information. People would have appreciated more practical information (decent/cheap places to eat, phone providers with good coverage, etc).

- Many people expressed their enthusiasm for more events, both to share their views on being an international student, as well as to meet other international students. I hope the International Students Campaign takes this to heart and is able to organize more social events next term, there seems to be real interest in them.

- I think it would be a good idea to keep a better tab on visiting students; these students are not always registered with a college, and as such are often just left to their own devices. This applies in particular to students coming to do internships with professors, or on an exchange or visiting program through their home institution.

- Some people mentioned that having informal pre-fresher's week events helped them feel more settled and comfortable. I know this is something we did at St Peter's this year, and we had a great response - not only did people get a chance to meet other students in college, it was an informal atmosphere, and we tried to go to different venues all over Oxford to highlight some of the greatest bits (ie. Cowley Road, various pubs, Jericho, etc).

In general, I got a sense that most people felt settled once here, but that there could have been a few things done that helped speed up this process, or made it easier. It is also clear that there is a need for events such as this, given the overwhelming response. My suggestion is that the International Students Campaign take note of these comments; it may also be helpful to perhaps give some recommendations to common rooms on how to alleviate stress for students before arriving in Oxford, as well as enhancing people's first few experiences here (this advice stands for all incoming students, not just international).

I would like to thank Chris, Arianna and Kiran for helping out on the day; your help made this event so much easier and I really appreciate it.

I've really enjoyed the opportunity to get involved with OUSU, and hope I am able to do so again next year. Best wishes!

Jess Pumphrey	LGBTQ Officer
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This term I've started negotiations with the uni about gender options on the student system, and looked at how we can work with the nus out in sport campaign to make sport more LGBTQ-friendly.

Clara Ferreira	Graduate Women's Officer
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Hi Council,

This term I have focused on the Athena Swan awards and on gender options in postgraduate forms.

a) Athena Swan and Gender - a official addition to the Graduate Women's role
Many departments in MPLS and in the Medical Sciences have now applied or are in the process of applying for the Athena Swan awards. Consulting with graduate women in these divisions, and with both departmental graduate representatives and graduate Athena Swan committee members has led the conclusion that many of the issues faced by graduate women are pervasive throughout these divisions and need addressing at the University level. The Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU) has recognized this issue, and now that data is available from several departments are ready to address the problems facing women in academia at the Division and University level. After meeting with Trudy Coe earlier this term, Suzanne Holsomback (Women's VP) and I have managed to implement siting on the University Advisory Group on Gender and Athena an official part of the Graduate Women's role, in order to tackle these issues.

b) Gender options in postgraduate forms - Equality changes effective next year

In first week council Suzanne, Jess Pumphrey (LGBTQ officer) and I brought a motion about alphabetically presenting genders and increasing the gender options on the online postgraduate application form. Jess and I met with Nadia Pollini (Head of Graduate admissions) and Jackie Hoyle (Head of Academic Data Management in Student Administration), and the new website for the main postgraduate applications (that will go live next year) will incorporate the alphabetical change! Increasing the gender options is not so trivial, since it abides to rules dictated by other bodies and will require national lobbying.

Next steps on this include ensuring that the alphabetically arranged gender options are presented throughout the University, ensuring that all the forms that trickle down from the application one maintain consistency.

It was lovely working with you all!

Clara Howcroft Ferreira
Graduate Women's officer

Nick Cooper

Academic Affairs Officer

Evening Council,

Hope everyone's had a great time since the last Council. It's been a fantastic year in the role - and many thanks to all of you who voted me in as Graduate Academic Affairs Officer for the upcoming year! It'll be great to stay part of OUSU, albeit with a new challenge to go forward with. As for this term, we are planning another meet up of all Academic Affairs common room officers, and hopefully imparting some useful advice and sharing ideas on how best to implement academic feedback sessions.

All the best to everyone, and to my successor Anya Metzger who I'm sure will do a fantastic job. Have a wonderful Christmas and see you in Hilary,

Nick