



OU Students
Association

OUSA in the East Midlands

December 2010

Dear Student,



A big hello and welcome, to OUSA in the East Midlands

December 2010 Newsletter.

What is OUSA?

It's the most popular question asked by O U students!

If you know about us great! If not and would like to know more, or if you have any questions regarding this newsletter, why not get in touch? The easiest way is to track down the regional forum via FirstClass but as some of you will be really, really new and getting stuck into your courses via the O U student homepage, feel free to drop me a line: Jacquiwithington1@gmail.com I'm Jacqui by the way, general student gopher, no job too small, no job too big. I live in Derby but don't support the Rams (sorry to any Rams fans). I also hold a post on the Executive Committee, I'm their Student Academic Link. I'm in my fourth year of study with the O U and will hopefully end up with a literature degree. Anyway, I won't waffle on any longer about that now!

In this issue we are bringing you news on the new OUSA East Midlands Assembly and Executive Committee and how **YOU** can be a part of it. Hopefully we won't confuse you too much, but if we do, LET US KNOW!

First though, the fun stuff!

Chinwag and Chocolate - *Peter Green (Burton on Trent area, Prospective A217 student)*

Maybe you're one of those O U students who relishes the solitude of O U study — and there's nothing wrong with that. However, I'm not. I like meeting up with other O U students — which is why I'm keeping an eye on the attempts to organise the next social gathering for Region 05 students that's being negotiated in the Regional Conference in FirstClass and the OUSA R05 Facebook page.

I've only been to one of the "Chinwag and Chocolate" meetings — it's a purely social gathering for any O U student in the area who wants to come along and meet other O U students. They have both been held in Derby so far.

The gathering I attended (held in a rather interesting, non-franchise cafe) was unfussy, friendly, and, as you would expect, slightly spooky. The spookiness, of course, is the result of meeting people whom I had only previously encountered online. Predictably enough, the handful of students there were diverse in age, experience, and occupation. The conversation ranged from the usual exchanges of information about what one studies to a rather lively — and friendly — conversation about education and OUSA.

Debate/Discussion Group?

One of the things we discussed was having a go at establishing a debate/discussion group for the region. The idea was inspired by an initiative at Loughborough University where a bunch of students and academics set up a debating society that meets in a hired room in a local pub to have a go at some meaty, interesting, and controversial topics that can be accessed by members of the University community irrespective of academic discipline.

Whether the meeting for debate gets off the ground or not, I hope the simple social gatherings keep happening. It can be both helpful and enjoyable to meet fellow O U students. And things change when you meet fellow students face-to-face whom you have hitherto only known online. I would say they become a bit more human — whatever that may mean.

(If you want to find out where and when the next 'Chinwag and Chocolate' is, drop a line to Jacqui and she'll sort you out with anything you need to know.)

Now for the other stuff;

Date for your diary: (the more the merrier, so please do come if you can!)

Saturday 22nd January 2011 Starts 10.30 prompt, plenty of free parking available!

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING (E G M)

The Open University: Regional Centre, Clumber Avenue, Nottingham.

This E G M will also have an online component on FirstClass in which can be accessed via OUSA Live/Regions/R05/On-line Meetings Forum, which will open on the 8th January and close on the 29th January when the minutes will be released and OUSA East Midlands Forum dissolved.

Due to OUSA East Midlands taking part in the transition trial of OUSA Futures by becoming an Assembly and Executive Committee, this will be the last Meeting of OUSA East Midlands Forum in its current state. This meeting will not have any voting for Officers and Postholders as these elected positions for the new Assembly and Executive Committee will have already taken place prior to the meeting and the results posted.



(Open University, East Midlands Regional Centre, Nottingham)

What on Earth are we waffling about?

Hopefully this next bit will answer some of your questions!

If you have spent time on-line in OUSA forums you may have come across references to OUSA Futures. OUSA Futures is a major reorganisation of OUSA and the way it goes about representing student opinion. Although there is still much work to be done and the process is not yet finished, OUSA within the East Midlands is about to follow in the footsteps of OUSA in Scotland, Wales and the East of England and trial the new structural proposals which we hope will be agreed by the whole of OUSA membership next spring.

The new OUSA East Midlands Assembly will facilitate the representation of O U students at a regional level within the East Midlands, both in the O U and the wider higher education sector. In addition, it will also have responsibility for providing an OUSA presence at O U events and supporting local OUSA groups.

The Assembly will consist of up to 32 elected volunteer student representatives from throughout the East Midlands and across all O U faculties. For the first time, all O U students within the East Midlands will have the opportunity to vote in the elections of their student reps and to stand for election to the OUSA East Midlands Assembly. This is an exciting time for OUSA in the East Midlands and we want you to be a part of it.

Read on!

Becoming an Assembly Representative

All O U students within the East Midlands will be entitled to stand for direct election to the Assembly. This includes you! Previously in OUSA it has usually been necessary to be part of your local OUSA branch (if there was one in your area) before becoming a delegate to the East Midlands Forum. The branches are now about to become de-formalised into local groups enabling them to focus on providing social activities and mutual support between their members whilst the Forum transforms into the Assembly and will concentrate on policy making and representation of the student interest within the East Midlands.



What level of commitment will be required?

As much or as little as you're able to give.

Participation may be at face-to-face Saturday meetings or may be remotely via online means, whichever suits you. It would also be helpful if representatives were able to spend a bit of time in between meetings taking part in online discussions by means of internet forums.

In addition to the Assembly Representatives, there will also be 6 positions available for Executive Committee Members. These students will be expected to take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the affairs of the Assembly and the level of commitment will thus be a bit higher with attendance at F2F meetings highly desirable. In line with OUSA policy, all representatives are unpaid volunteer students, although travel expenses are paid for attending meetings and other non-social events.

An Inaugural Face-to-Face Meeting will be held at the East Midlands Regional Centre, Nottingham, commencing immediately after the closing meeting of the East Midlands Forum which starts promptly at 10.30 a.m. Following the E G M there will be an associated on-line component from 8th – 29th January 2011.

Become involved and you'll get:

- The chance to network with O U students from all walks of life.
- The opportunity to have a say in the policies of OUSA in the East Midlands.
- To represent students to the O U (Excellent Experience for your C V).

- A chance to meet new people and make new friends.
- Help lead OUSA into the future.

Are you convinced yet? Alright then, I'll throw in one more!

- You get to meet me!

(actually, maybe that won't sell it.)

- I bring biscuits!

How do you apply?

Nominations are open now and close on the 20/12/10.

To obtain an election pack including a nomination form please contact Alison Ryan or Jacqueline Billson c.c. Tracey Philemon on FirstClass server one. To obtain a pack by post please call 01908 652026. If you don't use FirstClass for your studies, did you know you can still access it via the student homepage! (If you get stuck, just e-mail me and I'll be more than happy to help.)

Voting in the Elections

OUSA Futures will also introduce the concept of one member one vote for Region/Nation level elections. All O U students registered within the East Midlands will be able to register to vote in the elections. However, it will be necessary to “**sign up**” to an electoral register in order to participate in the vote. Even if you do not want to become a representative yourself, please do consider using this new opportunity to vote in the elections. There have been some quite vocal debates on the internet forums over the last few years calling for one member one vote. Now it's here, please use it.

You must be a full member of OUSA (i.e. a currently registered student or have recently finished a course) registered within the East Midlands in order to be able to vote. To sign up to the electoral register please submit your name, your PI number, your O U computer user name and a contact email address to Alison Ryan and Jacqueline Billson c.c. Tracey Philemon on FirstClass server one. This information will then be held on the electoral register for the East Midlands. The register is open now till 22/12/10 and ballot papers will be issued on the 5/1/11.

Don't forget these important dates

- ✓ **NOW! Register to Vote, Register your Nomination**
- ✓ Nominations Close - 20/12/10
- ✓ Electoral Register Closes - 22/12/10

- ✓ Ballot papers/Voting Instructions circulated - 5/1/11
- ✓ Ballot closes - 14/1/11
- ✓ OUSA East Midlands Forum - Extraordinary General Meeting & 'New' OUSA East Midlands Assembly and Executive Inaugural Meeting.
22nd January 2011 (online 8th - 29th January 2011)

We, the current active members, look forward to seeing as many students from within the East Midlands putting their names forward as Assembly Members as possible and even if you don't want to become an Assembly Member, ensure you register and use your vote: for years students have asked for ONE MEMBER ONE VOTE – now it is here please do take advantage of it!

DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER TO VOTE!

And finally, some useful information;

If you are experiencing problems with studies or having trouble finding your way around the O U systems there are people you can talk to. OUSA has a network of volunteer students available for students:

Disabled Student Link (D S L) email ousa-dsl@open.ac.uk for advice and information relating to studying with disability and you will be contacted.

Disabled Students Group (D S G) – a group run for and by students with disabilities. <http://ousa-dsg.open.ac.uk> Write to: OUSA Disabled Students Group Membership, PO Box 397, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6BE or call OUSA Office on 01908 652026 for further information.

Student Support Link (S S L) – for advice and information on support regarding your study email ousa-ssl@open.ac.uk and you will be contacted.

Peer Support Online: an anonymous, confidential service. Log in to FirstClass and send a message to 'P S Supporters' to contact the team or you can make initial contact via an email to the Peer Support administrator; OUSA-PS-ADMIN@open.ac.uk

N U S Extra Card and O U S A's own card

The N U S Extra card is available to O U students, for £11 per year. The card enables you to get various discounted goods. For more details and to get your N U S Extra Card visit: <http://www.nus.org.uk> (You will need your Personal Identifier)

To get the free OUSA membership card send a stamp, a passport sized photo, and proof of student status to: Membership Cards, OUSA Office, P O Box 397, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6BE.

Contact your local OUSA region now! Eastmidlandassembly@gmail.com You can also find us on facebook!