



OU Students
Association

SOUTH EAST

REGION

Newsletter

October 2010

Dear Student,

Welcome to OUSA – The Open University Students Association

Whether this is the first time you've heard of OUSA or whether you're already involved with the Association, we hope this newsletter will provide some interesting and useful information on what the Association is doing on your behalf and the latest developments in both the Open University (O U) and OUSA.

For those new to OUSA, When you register for a module with the Open University you automatically become a member of OUSA. OUSA is an organisation run by voluntary students, just like you, with the aim of improving all aspects of student life for O U students, from pointing you in the right direction for information, to increasing the social life often lacking in distance learning, to representing student views to the University and the government. Your Forum ensures local student voices are represented and issues are heard by the rest of the Association and the University

In the Autumn Newsletter from OUSA South East Region you will find the following articles:

- Residential School
- Graduation Day
- Futures in Your Region
- Facebook Group
- Regional Forum Website
- Student Academic Links
- Regional Forum Meeting 6th November 2010

As many O U courses have changed their start date to October, we wish everyone starting a new course the very best of luck. We hope you all enjoy the new study year!

HAPPY STUDYING!

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If you require this newsletter in alternative format, such as large print or coloured paper, then please contact your Branch Chair (details below) or the OUSA Office at ousa@student.open.ac.uk
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RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Did you know that the O U run a number of Residential Schools? Residential School is a component of some courses where the students live on a University campus for up to a week, gaining the opportunity for collaborative working or time in a laboratory for practical work in the sciences. Further information can be found at this link: <http://css2.open.ac.uk/resschools/Home.aspx> .

If you have attended a Residential School, did you enjoy it? Were there events and fundraising activities arranged by OUSA reps? If your answer to the first question was 'yes' I suspect you also answered 'yes' to the second.

In the South East we have a Residential School site at the University of Sussex which runs for 4 or 5 weeks during July and August. Normally we have 2 OUSA reps on campus each week running events for the students and selling O U branded merchandise. Unfortunately there was a national shortage of volunteers this year so Sussex didn't have any OUSA reps on site during the week. What we did manage to arrange, at very short notice, was for OUSA helpers to 'Meet & Greet' the students when they arrived to register on the Saturday afternoon. The helpers all enjoyed themselves and the students appreciated a friendly smile and someone to point them in the direction of whatever it was they needed – whether a cup of coffee, a beer, something to eat or their accommodation.

Even though we had no reps on site all week events were put on by the University of Sussex Student Union (USSU) for O U students. This is because a previous coordinator had arranged 2009 events in conjunction with USSU and planning for this year's events was already well underway by the time we knew there wouldn't be any OUSA reps on campus. The downside was the fact that USSU kept all the takings and we were unable to raise funds for OUSET – our charity. If you think you may like to help next year, for as little as one Saturday afternoon to a full week, please see below.

Jenny Turner

Residential School Liaison (2010)

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VOLUNTEERING

If you would like to become more involved in OUSA, perhaps volunteering to rep at Residential School next summer, or help out at the Graduation Ceremony in April, please contact the OUSA office and ask for an Application Form. It is very rewarding and makes a huge difference to the students' experience of both Residential School and Graduation Day.

Graduation Day

Friday 17th September dawned bright and clear, and I awoke early full of nervous anticipation – my Graduation Day had arrived.

As I had never been to a Graduation Ceremony before, being the first in my family to gain a degree, I was unsure of what to expect, but the comprehensive guidance notes provided by the O U meant that at least I knew what to do. First port of call was the Registration Desk, where I joined the shortest queue, only to find registration was alphabetical by surname, and I am at the end of the alphabet. I was a little disappointed to receive my Certificate then, not after the ceremony, but logistically there was no alternative due to the number of students graduating. My guests' tickets were ready in an envelope, together with a card with my name on to hand to the announcer on stage.

Once registered, I headed for the robing area, and was glad I had printed out the O U information as the code I needed for my robe was on one of the sheets. I was handed a bundle of navy blue cloth, which miraculously turned into an uncreased robe in the hands of my dresser. The hood was easy to attach – Velcro had replaced the need for safety-pins, and a small loop secured it to a button on my shirt.

Next came photography, and I was ushered into one of a large number of 'stalls' with a camera and backdrop set up, and a mark on the floor to stand on. The photographer gave me a dummy scroll tied with red ribbon to hold, and positioned me in a most uncomfortable pose – I hope the end result was worth the effort!

Finally it was time for the Ceremony, and I parted company with my guests and took my seat in the auditorium. The music played, and the academic procession began, led onto the stage by someone carrying a mace (which reminded me of an executioner's axe as the butterflies fluttered in my stomach). After the initial address, those students with the highest Research Degrees were presented first, and details of their thesis topic announced to the audience. The Masters Degrees were next, followed by the Honours, and then it was my turn.

Graduates were seated in the order they were due to be presented, and I was on the end of a row, so I was called to lead the row around to the stage steps. The butterflies were now doing somersaults as I climbed the steps and handed my card to the announcer. As my name was called I choked up, remembering the hard work I had put in to gain the degree and the fact that my Mum hadn't been able to make the ceremony due to ill health. As I shook hands with the Presiding Officer the tears welled. She congratulated me on my achievement, and told me to keep smiling. I nodded, and made my way across the stage and back to my seat, feeling an enormous sense of relief and yet achievement.

When all the graduates had been presented the Presiding Officer addressed the audience before the Academic Procession left the auditorium, followed by the new graduates. After returning my robes we battled the London rush hour again to return home tired but exhilarated. My Graduation Day is certainly a day I will never forget.

Glenda Youde

Comms Officer, South East Region

OUSA's FUTURE

For the last 40 years the Open University has been providing distance learners with the opportunity for open access higher education. For the last 40 years The Open University Students' Association has offered students representation to the University, study support, and a chance to get involved with other students.

A lot has changed in 40 years. Courses have become modules, technology has changed the face of study, and much of the contact with students is now online. The University has changed and OUSA is in the process of making radical changes too. The OUSA Futures consultation that has been running over the last few years is reaching its conclusion and we hope to have a new structure that is more relevant to students in the 21st Century. Out goes the paperwork and red tape, in come the opportunities to create the type of groups and networks that suit YOU.

We will be looking at the how to make the changes meaningful for students in the South East at the Forum AGM. All students in our area will be welcome to contribute in the online meeting held in OUSA South East on FirstClass. Among the issues we will be looking at are how to implement a Regional Assembly, who would be interested in joining the team and what kinds of groups or networks students in the South East would like to see available.

I am aware that accessing this forum might be difficult for some students so if you can't access please feel free to mail me on ousao35@open.ac.uk, or leave comments on OUSA South East on Facebook and we'll get back to you.

Sue Glover

Executive Committee Member for the South East

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SOUTH EAST REGION FACEBOOK GROUP

We have set up a new Facebook group for South East Region OU students, called OUSA South East. This is a fun and useful way to introduce yourself to other students, chat and exchange information about courses, and find out about regional events and meetings.

If you are an old hand at Facebook, or if it is something new to you, why not pop in and say "Hello" to everyone!

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FORUM WEBSITE

Julius Smit is the new Web Administrator for OUSA South East. He has given the website a complete makeover so it is now easier to navigate, with the emphasis on clarity and simplicity.

Why not take a look at <http://www.southeastousa.org.uk/>

Please let Glenda know on gy224@student.open.ac.uk if you have any comments on the website and we will forward these to Julius.

- STUDENT SUPPORT – STUDENT ACADEMIC LINKS

Have you ever found yourself with a burning question about O U study and no idea where to turn for help? Many students are happy to post their questions to the OUSA FirstClass Forums or Moodle Course Forums, but others prefer a more personal approach. Sometimes neither your tutor nor your Regional Office seems the right person to ask.

Many types of question arise, such as if you are be considering taking a particular study module and wondered if there was somewhere to chat to current students to hear their views. You might have a question about funding, or a change in personal circumstances may cause you to consider withdrawing from a course. You might just want a friendly understanding ear to bounce your thoughts off to help you come to a decision.

Known as “Links” because they form a bridge between student and the O U, the main role of a Student Academic Link is to help with any study-related questions and direct students to the appropriate source where they will find their answer. Student Academic Links don’t have all the answers, but they know where to go to find out!

So next time you don’t know where to turn to for the answer to that elusive question, why not try your Regional Student Academic Link?

Arts – Glenda Youde

Education and Languages - Karen Way

Management and Law - Joanne Clark

MCT - Dan Glover

Science – Jenny Turner

As student e-mail addresses are shortly moving to g-mail, please contact the regional office for the latest details of how to contact your Student Academic Link

FORUM MEETING

6TH NOVEMBER 2010

The Forum Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 6th November 2010 commencing 1.00 pm for those who sit on the forum. The meeting will be held at Regional Office, St James's House, 150 London Road East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 1 HG. Allocated parking is available on site. East Grinstead station is about 10 minutes walk away.

A map can be found at the following link:

<http://www3.open.ac.uk/contact/maps.aspx?contactid=13>

There will also be an online component to the meeting, which all students in the South East are welcome to join.

The online meeting will be held from 20th October 2010 to 20th November 2010, using the FirstClass conferencing system.

The draft agenda is as follows, the final agenda will be posted to OUSA South East on FirstClass in good time. If you don't have access to FirstClass, please mail Jenny Turner on jmt57@student.open.ac.uk for a copy of the final agenda.

DRAFT AGENDA

- 1.0 Welcome
- 2.0 Apologies
- 3.0 Minutes of previous meeting
- 4.0 Matters arising
- 5.0 Reports
- 6.0 Discussion on becoming an Assembly
- 7.0 Nomination and election of post holders
- 8.0 Any other business
- 9.0 Date of next meeting