

Meeting:	Taught Academic Council Minutes		
Location:	3 West North 3.7		
Date & Time:	Thursday 28th March 2019 12:15-14:05		
Present:			
Jack Kitchen	SU Education Officer		
In attendance:			
Ryan Myles-Roberts	Academic Representation Coordinator		
Amy Young	Engagement and Quality Coordinator		
Sam Cook	Peer Support Coordinator		
Ines Khalifa Barnard	Secretary		
Item			
1.	Apologies and Notice of Absence		
	Name	Reason	Accepted
	Jiani Zhou	On Mental Health Training	Yes
2.	Officer Updates		
	<p>The Education Officer justified the Postgraduate Officer's absence to the Council and assured that she would send her updates at a later stage.</p> <p>The Education Officer gave an update on the ongoing issue with the Physics student formula booklet, which students have reported to contain errors. The Education Officer expressed his determination to find a solution for this issue, which is likely to be achieved in the next academic year.</p> <p>The Education Officer thanked the Academic Reps for their input in the document regarding errors in exam scripts. The monitoring of all errors and the way students report them, was informed to start in June/July.</p> <p>The Education Awards are taking place on Friday April 5th.</p> <p>The Education Officer informed the committee of the newly elected SU Officers, and of his successor's presence at the next Academic Council.</p> <p>The Education Officer mentioned the successful adoption of the governance referendum aimed to simplify bureaucracy.</p> <p>An interview with the Dean of the School of Management carried out by the Education Officer and the editor from Bath Time was reported to be published.</p>		
3.	Academic Rep Handover		
	<p>The committee discussed the best ways through which an Academic Rep Handover could be achieved, including the information current Reps wished they had known when starting their role as well as the important information they would like to communicate to their successors.</p>		

Reps among Session 1 voiced their initial issues with reaching out to the entire programme, getting feedback and representing all of their peers' interests. The need to clarify the Academic Rep's role was noted. Knowing which issues to raise during a Council meeting was also mentioned. Reps in Session 2 noted the lack of clarification regarding the type either of feedback they are expected to get from their peers and would have appreciated an introduction about the Academic Rep's role, face to face or via electronic communication.

Regarding the advice current Reps have for their successors, the idea of holding 'satisfaction talks' with peers and voicing the resulting feedback in Council meetings was suggested. The Computer Science (CS) Rep from Session 2 noted the usefulness of receiving a document containing the acronyms that would be used during meetings in order to gain better understanding of topics discussed.

Ideas of ways through which to communicate a Handover, voiced by Session 1:

- Via a Facebook group with old and new Reps;
- A quick video in which current Reps pass valuable information on in a few sentences;
- An emailing system;
- A similar scheme to the one of peer mentoring;
- A similar page to the one for Peer Assisted Learning (PAL): summarising the year's achievements, challenges, issues addressed and solutions found.

Ideas voiced by Session 2:

- Delivering the minutes of the previous academic year;
- Electronic submission (i.e. via Moodle) of a 1-page document containing all the issues that were dealt with during the previous academic year, outlining the solutions found in order to re-use them. This idea was thought to be more appropriate for Staff / Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs).
- Training to explain the structure and expectations of Councils, identifying relevant issues, and how to communicate them.

The Education Officer reminded the committee that additional ideas could be emailed to him, and informed that these ideas will be further developed upon in the next Academic Council.

4.

Feedback from the floor

A Rep from the Session 1 informed that there was a communication issues between teachers and lab leaders.

Complaints about extreme marking (having very low or very high marks that result in a normal average) were voiced, notably by the Electrical Engineering Rep from Session 1. A formal complaint with a survey another Academic Rep from the School of Management from Session 1 carried out with the students were sent to the lecturer in question. The Education Officer explained that this issue should be raise with the Director Of Studies (DOS) as he can best identify the issues. If no action is taken, the issue must be addressed to the SSLC. The Committee was made aware that marks are always provisional until the June-July Board of Examiners meets, after which, students

Chair:	
Date:	

affected by decisions taken during the meeting, are directly informed. The Education Officer assured that he was addressing the problem of scaling exams.

The Biology Rep in Session 1 shared her lack of success in holding an open SSLC meeting with high turnout, despite publicity and free pizza advertised. The CS Rep from Session 1 suggested to schedule such events in between two highly attended lectures and advertising the session as a 'Student Forum' with free refreshments. The Education Officer also suggested the possibility of holding the first part of the session with students and Reps only, and the second part with staff and Reps relaying the information.

The Rep from the HR and Finance Programme from Session 1, voiced her concerns about the lack of diversity in her programme, which is an issue in terms of culture, learning capabilities, and socialisation. This concern was also shared by the Postgrad Education Rep from Session 1. The Education Officer explained that such matters should be raised at the SSLC meetings. The need for better advertisement of the programmes offered at university, across a wide range of countries, was stressed, notably by the Entrepreneurship Rep from Session 1.

Complaints from third-years regarding a 12-credit group project were mentioned in Session 1. Reps from Session 2 also discussed the issue of free-riding in group projects and the dilemma a student is subsequently confronted to. The CS Rep from Session 2 notably informed of the marking issues with group contribution in coursework. The Education Officer suggested to mention this issue to the Faculty Rep as a faculty perspective could better tackle the problem and find a more appropriate assessment of the specific module.

The existence of a specific document used to declare issues encountered in group projects was disclosed by the Accounting and Finance Rep from Session 2. The latter also informed of the new IMC request, granted for students whose placement obligations overlap with assessments.

Reps from Session 2 enquired about the way through which lecture-related issues should be raised. The Education Officer suggested to raise them with the DOS first and then with the SSLC if no further action is taken.

5.

Placement Peer Mentoring

The Peer Support Coordinator introduced the novel Placement Peer Mentoring scheme his team is currently working on. The project consists of having a Peer Mentor for students undertaking the degree with a placement year, either during the application process or whilst on placement. This has been experimented with the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS).

The two situations with their advantages and disadvantages were discussed in both sessions. Session 1 had a more heterogeneous assembly in terms of student experiences and views than Session 2. The latter had mostly not been on placement and majorly argued in favour of having a Peer Mentor whilst applying for a placement as a peer who has already been on placement can give better tips than the university placement team, and provide direct insight about a specific role, expectations and application process. Session 1 shared this opinion but also voiced the advantages of the second option, namely having someone to relate personal issues to as there is no

interaction or connection with the university whilst on placement. When applying for placements in second year, students do not foresee potential issues they are likely to face and are consequently unprepared to manage them. The Business & Administration (BBA) Rep from Session 1 mentioned the system they use in her course, which allows them to fill in a form about the specificities of the role and the issues that arose during their time on placement. This information is then available for peers to access. The need to train this potential Peer Mentor for students who are on placement was noted.

Session 1 suggested to have a Placement Peer Mentor for both situations. The Accounting and Finance Rep from Session 2 agreed that students on placement also need support. However, she suggested the idea of having students create a support group with those who will be on placement in the same area as them, and meet up regularly to discuss their issues in person.

Nevertheless, both sessions discussed the disadvantages of having a stranger as a Peer Mentor for students who are on placement, limited to virtual communication. Session 1 had a 50-50 split regarding this concern. The BBA Rep from Session 1 also specified that an online forum for their course in which any student can ask any question anonymously already existed. Another Rep from session 1 mentioned the natural urge students applying for placement have, in terms of seeking out students who have already been on placement and had a similar role to the one they want. Thus, students eventually find the information they are looking for without having a Placement Peer Mentor per se.

Session 2 discussed ways through which information about placement could be better communicated to their peers. The Accounting and Finance Rep noted the delay in delivering the Professional Development Programme (PDP) sessions. These are not coordinated with the actual application deadlines, leaving students unprepared for placement assessments. The Education Officer stressed the need to raise this issue with the SSLC. The Architecture Rep suggested to hold meetings with students from their course who have returned from placement as the information they share is very useful for those applying. The idea of getting assigned a Peer Mentor based on the location and type of role the student seeks was mentioned. Communicating tips for placement via Facebook was also suggested.

6. **Any other business (AOB)**

No items wer raised for AOB.

The meeting ended at 14:05.