

**Meeting:** Taught Academic Council

**Place:** CB 4.16

**Date and Time:** Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February

---

**Present** *See Attendee List*

**1. Introduction from SU Postgraduate Officer**

Apologies for absence were received from the SU Education Officer, the SU Postgraduate Officer chaired the meetings.

**2. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

No matters were discussed from the previous minutes

**3. Notice of Any Other Business (A.O.B)**

- UCU strike
- Education awards

**4. Updates from SU Education Officer and SU Postgraduate Officer**

There was no update from the SU Education Officer. The SU Postgraduate Officer briefly discussed refresh week that was currently happening in the Students' Union and promoted some postgraduate-specific events. Postgraduate academic representatives were encouraged to promote these events to other postgraduate students on their course.

**5. Technology Enhanced Learning**

The purpose of this part of the meeting was to demonstrate how a piece of software called TurningPoint could be used to make lectures more interactive and to gather feedback from Academic Representatives regarding their experiences of using the tool in a learning and teaching setting. Academic Representatives were given clickers to vote on questions shown on the board.

72 representatives attended the first session and 52 attended the second session.

Have you used Turning Point before?

In the first session 49% of attendees had not used Turning Point and 51% had. In the second session, only 16% of attendees had used Turning Point before and 84% had no experience of Turning Point.

If so, when did you use it? Did it enhance your learning?

Academic Representatives commented that Turning Point had been used frequently in revision lectures as a form of preparation for exams, using multiple choice questions. This gives the lecturer the opportunity to see whether there are any gaps in the understanding or knowledge of the majority of the class. An Academic Representative said that it was good because it allows everyone to participate and the anonymity means that people are not so concerned about getting the wrong answer. Some Academic Representatives said that they found that Turning Point can only be used to test basic questions and that it was not possible to use it to test understanding or for subjects that are not tested using yes/no or multiple-choice questions.

Do you think it would be a good idea to use Turning Point as a type of formative assessment in class?

21% of attendees in the first session and 35% in the second session voted for strongly agree. Reasons for this included that Turning Point was particularly good for large lecture rooms, where it is otherwise difficult for lecturers to check if people are stuck and whether they should go over something again. It is also good for students who are from other cultures who may be more shy and reluctant to speak up in class. Another benefit of this software is that the results can be seen immediately, which is useful for testing knowledge and understanding of basic principles.

36% in the first session and 44% in the second session voted for agree. Reasons for this included that whilst it was useful to check understanding in lectures, it may not be so useful for answering more in-depth questions. Academic Representatives thought it was good as part of formative assessment, but thought that it needs to be used in balance with other forms of assessment.

21% in the first session and 8% in the second session voted for neutral. Reasons for this included that this limits the lecturers to multiple choice questions and the only feedback given is a percentage score, rather than an explanation or more specific feedback. Other Academic Representatives did not see how Turning Point could be used in relation to their programme of study.

15% in the first session and 12% in the second session voted for disagree. Reasons for this included that their units were essay based, so multiple-choice questions were not useful. An Academic Representative thought that Turning Point would be better as an engagement tool rather than an assessment tool. Some Academic Representatives thought that there were other forms of assessment, such as problem sheets, that were more beneficial for testing their understanding and ability.

8% in the first session and 2% in the second session voted for strongly disagree. Reasons for this included that it was hard to know if your vote was counted using the clickers. Also, if the majority of students got a question right then it was often not explained, even if there were a minority of students who did not understand the answer.

### Would it be good for lecturers to use Turning Point for gauging the broad understanding of the class and using this for targeting revision?

Another possible use of Turning Point is as a way of gathering opinions about topics. Lecturers could go through a list of topics covered in a unit and ask students to rate their understanding/confidence in a topic and ask whether they would like that unit to be reviewed. This could then be used to identify knowledge gaps within the unit and then target revision appropriately.

90% (of each session) of the Academic Representatives agreed that this would be useful. They said that they thought this would speed up lectures and make them more interactive and immediate.

10% (of each session) said that this would not be useful, particularly those who did not think that it would be useful for their subject, e.g. subjects that are more discussion based and cannot have yes or no answers.

### Would you like to use Turning Point in class?

64% of attendees in the first session and 66% in the second session voted yes. They thought that it would encourage people to contribute more, it gives people more confidence, and may increase the likelihood that they speak up and back up their opinion/answer vocally afterwards. It is also faster than programmes that rely on wifi, is good that it is anonymous and is open to anyone, regardless of whether they have a laptop or mobile phone.

31% of attendees in the first session and 30% in the second session voted maybe. They liked the concept of Turning Point but had experience using other, similar, programmes that can be used on mobile phones and allow you to type full answers, rather than just multiple choice.

6% of attendees in the first session and 4% in the second session voted no.

### Conclusions

Academic Representatives were encouraged to talk to their lecturers and members of staff about Turning Point and ask whether they would consider using this technology. There are many resources available to staff to teach them how to use the system and software, such as the technology team and audio-visual team in the Centre for Learning and Teaching. There are many more functions available in Turning Point than those demonstrated in this meeting.

## 6. Scaling

The issue of scaling was discussed as this is a topic that is currently being addressed by a number of student Faculty Representatives and the SU Education Officer.

### What is scaling?

The SU Postgraduate Officer firstly explained the concept of scaling, as many Academic Representatives in attendance were unaware of what scaling is. The University has produced guidance on scaling and can be access here: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/quality/documents/QA35-Appendix4-Scaling-Guidance-20121031-final.pdf>.

### What experience have you had of exams being scaled?

Many Academic Representatives reported that they did not know whether their marks had been scaled, and if it had happened, the extent to which their marks had been scaled. Some reported that when an exam has gone badly, lecturers have said that the exam will be discussed, however they are rarely given follow-up information, leading to increased stress about the results of the exam.

A few Academic Representatives had had experience of scaling, two representatives shared their experience of scaling where their marks were scaled down. One Academic Representative said that lecturers said that this was because the exam was too easy, however the other Academic Representative said that they received no communication about the scaling. Another Academic Representative reported that they received an email following the most recent exam period (January 2018) asking students about their experience of one exam, they were told that there was a possibility of the marks being scaled up.

Academic Representatives agreed that if marks had been scaled, they would like to know as soon as possible. Students would also like to be informed of the reasons for the scaling.

### How would you like to receive information about scaling?

There were many different suggestions in response to this question. A few Academic Representatives suggested that an email explaining the scaling would be the best technique. Another suggested that the scaling report should be made available to students along with the generic exam feedback. Other Academic Representatives suggested that a session should be offered to explain the scaling, this would provide students with the opportunity to understand what has happened and address the issue if they wanted to. A further suggestion was to provide information about scaling in the handbook and advise students in advance that this is a possibility. A final suggestion was to give this information to academic tutors, students could then find out more information about the scaling and see whether there were particular areas that all students were unsuccessful in.

### Would you want to know how much an exam was scaled by? Why?

There was some debate regarding this question, with some Academic Representatives suggesting that their response would differ depending on whether the marks had been scaled up or scaled down. Some Academic Representatives thought that this may create problems if students could know their original mark, and knew that the scaling had reduced this, resulting in a change of grade. Other Academic Representatives did not think that the scaling amount was important because it happens the same to every student in the cohort. One Academic Representative argued that by knowing the scaling they would be able to figure out their exam result, which would allow them to evaluate their actual understanding, suggesting that the grade represents their knowledge. However, another Academic Representative argued that if scaling occurred, it is unlikely that the exam reflected the unit, thus not reflecting their knowledge.

Academic Representatives agreed that they would be more interested to know the reasons for the scaling, as opposed to the exact numbers.

### Conclusions

This is a topic that is currently being addressed by some of the undergraduate student Faculty Representatives and the SU Education Officer and updates will be given to Academic Representatives in upcoming meetings.

One of the faculty representatives who was present in the first session (undergraduate Faculty Representative for the Faculty of Engineering and Design) gave an update of progress to date. He has been working alongside other faculty representatives to try and get transparency on scaling, so that students are informed and aware of this. He has met with the University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) who has agreed to pursue this matter further. Further updates would be brought back to Taught Academic Council in the future.

## **7. Feedback from the Floor**

Academic representatives were given the opportunity to feedback any issues from their programme or SSLC meetings. Very few had had their SSLC meetings for this term.

### Natural Sciences

An Academic Representative for Natural Sciences explained how Natural Science students attend lectures across a number of different departments and therefore the representatives attend other SSLCs (e.g. Chemistry). They found that Natural Science issues often get overlooked because they are not 'home' students of that particular department, despite the fact that they are still taking that particular unit. This is an ongoing issue and something that is being addressed.

### Unit evaluations

One of the Academic Representatives discussed the fact that unit feedback is often requested before a unit is completed, around half way through the term. It was suggested that unit evaluations should be collected twice, once after teaching was completed, and then another one after the exam.

A question was also raised about response rates for online evaluations, as the student had an experience where 29.8% of the cohort responded to an evaluation so the lecturer did not think that there was a requirement to respond to the feedback if under 30% response rate. The Engagement and Quality Co-ordinator explained that the issue is that this data may not be considered representative of the unit cohort, but may be looked at alongside other data.

### Feedback

One Academic Representative stated that some students on their programme would prefer one-to-one feedback on coursework to understand what was going wrong or right. When this was requested, the lecturer referred to the handbook, meaning that the student was unable to gauge what was actually going wrong. The SU Postgraduate Officer suggested that the most effective solution in this situation would be for all students to contact the lecturer to discuss, or speak to someone else in the department if all students felt this way. [Secretary's note: Issues such as this should also be brought to SSLCs for discussion with the Director of Studies and other Academic Representatives to identify issues or areas of good practice.]

Another Academic Representative reported that some members of staff were not adhering to the 3-week return on coursework feedback. This is frustrating because students are heavily penalised for not turning in their work on time, but there are no consequences for staff. The SU Postgraduate Officer advised the representative to speak to their Director of Studies.

## **8. SU Officer Elections**



The SU Postgraduate Officer discussed the upcoming SU Officer elections, he advertised two sessions: 'Elections Campaign Training' and 'Manifesto Training' happening 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> February and encouraged students to attend these if they were interested in running for an SU Officer position. He also welcomed any questions or queries about his role or the role of an SU Officer in general if representatives wanted to know more.

Nominations close at 12pm on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018. More information on the SU Officer elections could be found at [www.thesubath.com/elections](http://www.thesubath.com/elections)

## 9. Town Hall Event – Transforming the Curriculum

A Town Hall event is taking place on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February at 13:15 in CB5.1. The transformation of the curriculum will be discussed by a panel including the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching), the SU Education Officer, an Associate Dean, member of staff from the Centre for Learning and Teaching and a postgraduate taught student Faculty Representative. An update will be given at the next meeting to give more information and answer any questions that representatives have. Representatives were encouraged to attend and invited to sign up to attend on EventBrite.

## 10. Any Other Business

### UCU Strike

The University and College Union (UCU), who represent over 500 members of staff at the University, are taking strike action in response to decisions to change the way their pension scheme, Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) works. Academic Representatives were informed that their lectures may be cancelled as a result of the strike. The SU is holding an indicative poll on the SU website that will inform the view of the SU regarding the strike. Students are able to find more information about the strike and the reasons for and against the strike, as well as being able to cast their vote on this website - <https://www.thesubath.com/campaigns/ucustrike/>. Further information for Academic Representatives will be communicated soon.

### Education Awards

The Education Awards are taking place on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April. Academic Representatives are invited to nominate, and encourage students to nominate, Academic Representatives and members of staff for awards on the website - <https://www.thesubath.com/academicreps/awards/>. Nominations close on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. If they would like to nominate their Faculty Representative for an award they are invited to email the [academicreps@bath.ac.uk](mailto:academicreps@bath.ac.uk)

## 11. Time and Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March at 12.15pm and repeated at 13.15 in CB 5.1.

## Attendees