THE SU UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Minutes

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Meeting: Taught Academic Council
Place: CB 5.1
Date and Time: Thursday 16th November, 12:15 – 2:05
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Present:

Jessica Mullett
Marianne Aspbury
Adam Hughes
Hannah-Jade Parker
Rapheal Ofoe
Pearl Pulges
Haicong Peng
Soul Pievce
Kieran Warwick
Rebecca Lim
Julia Wong
Alex Benjamin Szerkeres
Mara Grigore
Lauren Webb
Jerrican Hallinan
Khumbo Nyirenda
Sam Evans
Maya Khurana
Muyun Wu
Yunpeng Li
Meg Marumoto
Rowan Smith
Kaja Vassbotten
Oliver Holt
Charlie Deverson
Robert Eardley
Smaranda Balu
Lisanne Heinz
Amy Staines
Brianna Marie Wong
Tingyu Liu
Kevin Kwang
Juliette Duplant – Weill
Georgie Stimpson
Natasha Lee
Idris Kagran

Danqi Huang
Ritika Israni
Yuwen Sheng
Rob Tyrell
Jack Clark
Jade Piggato
Simon Waterhouse
Munshur Ali
Molly Crawford
Sachin Janagal
Dhruv Gupta
Robert Critchlow
George Jones
Louis Jamieson
Joshua Olabeye
Gemma Barnett
Shiyue Su
Carolina Hinojosa
Charlotte Simmonds
Dhiren Jhugroo
James Kay
Jonel Li Fat Chuen
Willow Wyatt
Edwina Baiden
Yewen Zhang
Yulei Sun
Yumming Liu
Srenia Stebber
Grace Campbell
Alex Christo
Kieron Cardall
Amelia Nooneu
Amish Scingu
Yieang Yang
Namel Bulloch
Kin Hong Wong
Zhanna Nazarento
Joe Ollis
Sarah Hickey
Suzannah Belk
Alexis Lazareff
Rob Douglas
Anne-Dauphine de Keihor
Tilly Walters
Sean Mcarthy
James Fossey
Alex O'Neill
Katherine Holt
Anna Newman
Philip Hummel

Kat Massmann
Fay Nikolopoulo
Natalie Belgrove
Andrea Christou
Ieuan Marks-Venables
Matthew Monti
Tara Uygur
Sylvia Raftopoulou
Matilda George
Lauren Young
Samira Kelley
Pakinam Abdelrahman
Sara Al Dada
Zorry Belcheva
Caroline Boyd-Felton
Jiayue Qin
Hannah Parker
Megan Reeve
Tomo Homan
Freya Tooley
Olivia Ruston
Alistair Stone
Aage Voit Noble
Daniel Evans

Update from SU Education Officer

The SU Education Officer discussed progress in relation to the Printing section of the SU Top Ten. She also raised the positive outcome of the recent Officer Review Panel, and news that issues surrounding disparity between Moodle and Panopto had been resolved. Finally a new tool on the SU website called "What's going on?" was discussed, this provides a way for Academic Reps to feedback issues or good practise to the SU in between meetings.

The Postgraduate Officer discussed the results of the annual Officer Report. This recently went out to the University Learning and Teaching Committee and there will be a meeting next week looking at how issues raised in the report can be addressed.

Annika Theilgaard - Peer Support Coordinator

The Peer Support Coordinator informed Academic Reps about the purpose of weekly Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) sessions and encouraged them to attend in order to create an informal study space for students where they can develop understanding together.

She also raised the point that PAL leaders meet with students from all departments weekly so gather a wealth of information surrounding what is working on each course, and what is not. It was discussed that it would be beneficial for Academic

Reps to contact PAL leaders to develop a cohesive understanding of what is happening in departments so Academic Reps can feed this back to SSLC's and TAC's. Academic Reps were encouraged to contact the Representation Team to get put in touch with PAL leaders in their faculties.

Feedback from the floor

The Academic Rep for Entrepreneurial Management raised the issue that there had not yet been a SSLC for their course. The Academic Representation Coordinator volunteered to email the relevant parties to arrange this.

Peter Lambert - Pro Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching

Introduction

The Pro Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching thanked the Academic Reps for stepping up and becoming part of how the University works through gathering feedback to improve teaching. He ensured Academic Reps that their opinions and comments are highly valued, as student feedback must, and does, inform the way things are done.

He informed that in the past month the Senate has given permission for the curriculum and assessment at the University to be modernised over the next few years. The current curriculum has served the University well, with good classes leading to well-prepared students as shown in the successful areas of the National Student Survey, however he mentioned that there are some things that aren't being done as well as they should be.

He informed that the overall change will be towards a more programme led curriculum, at the moment it is very modular with staff very focused on their individual unit. It was discussed that a more cohesive approach of working needs to be developed by creating a greater programme identity. This would mean the introduction of cross unit assessments would be a possibility, reducing the amount of assessment as it is felt there is an element of over assessment in the establishment. This has been seen through levels of student stressed witnessed by student services, so comes about not only as a solution to good practise, but also student well-being. This would reduce the high pressure points in the semester for both students and staff, and also allow staff to provide more in depth feedback. Another change will be introducing more blended learning with increased focus on technology, it was recognised that greater consistency is required in the way lecturers use technology in teaching.

The Pro Vice Chancellor highlighted that the curriculum hasn't been changed since 1996 so will be brought into the 21st Century, with more focus on inclusive, sustainable and globally aware content. This is a project that will take a few years and students are encouraged to provide feedback on the process.

Progress so far:

The Pro Vice Chancellor discussed what has been done so far this academic year to improve University Learning and Teaching.

In regards to Personal Tutors, an issue in last year's SU Top Ten, a report has been created that has recently gone through the University Learning and Teaching Quality Committee. This focuses on issues of consistency across faculties, departments and individuals and greater clarity in the kind of support that should be offered, and work will begin building on this report in Semester 2.

Work has been done around Online Unit Evaluations, looking at how to make them more effective. The questions have been reduced and redesigned based on feedback from staff and students and lectures must now respond to feedback within a set amount of time. Going forward it will be possible to see what responses have been in previous years, allowing greater transparency.

Work is also ongoing regarding increasing study space. £100,000 a year is being put into the refurbishment of the library, creating more space. On top of this 10 West, Virgil Buildings, Norwood House Learning Commons and other areas have increased the area available for students to study in.

Finally the SU were congratulated on the "Never Okay" campaign against sexual harassment and hate crimes.
This has received coverage and support from other Universities and was described as a tremendous example of the SU taking initiative to bring about positive change.

Questions from the floor

It was asked how The Pro Vice Chancellor would ensure feedback was gained from all students in curriculum changes. In response it was mentioned that Academic Reps would play a large part and on top of these a consultation service would be put in place involving; staff, external stake holders, professional services and current students.

Another Academic Rep queried what could be done if a lecturer refused to use Panopto. In response it was explained that Panopto is not compulsory and the most effective solution would be to speak to the lecturer and explain why it would be beneficial to learning. It can also be added onto the end of unit evaluation, by applying positive diplomatic pressure. The SU Education Officer offered assistance to any Academic Rep in forming an argument to take to lecturers.

It was asked what is fair to expect from Personal Tutors. In response the Pro Vice Chancellor highlighted that the relationship should be two way, however they should

provide students with a certain amount of contact time and should listen to and support students both academically and personally through signposting. This was also discussed in terms of providing references and academic feedback, although it is not mandatory of Personal Tutors it is a fair expectation.

Another question asked what is being done to increase the amount of lecture content provided on Moodle. In response it was highlighted that there is not time to go through every unit but that a selection of units are being looked at. It was recognised there is a lot of variation in how Moodle is used and mentioned that a training package is being developed for staff to more effectively use the system.

It was asked how the curriculum will be made more sustainable and if these additions to curriculum will be assessed as additional modules. The response to this was that ideas of environmental, economic and societal sustainability will be introduced into readings and theories studied to produce more educated graduates. This will not be assessed as such, but will be incorporated into all aspects of study so there is a focus on issues in a global society and in relation to all students.

It was asked what procedure could be followed if students were unsatisfied with teaching from individual lecturers. It was replied that the first step would be talking to the lecture and giving clear reasons for what is not working, if this does not help it would then be appropriate to sort it at a local level through the Director of Studies and failing that the Head of Department. It would also be appropriate to ask advice for Academic Reps who can offer assistance and get support from the SU. It was mentioned that a formal complaint would be reserved for very serious problems and would be a last resort. "Stop, Start, Continue" will also be introduced into all modules as a diplomatic way of giving feedback.

It was mentioned that the Vangard programmes aim to link career skills into teaching and asked how this would be made available to the one year Postgraduate students. In response it was mentioned the focus was in first year Undergraduates who currently are assessed despite the grades not contributing to their degree. Due to this it seems more effective to teach skills they can use in careers and employability. As Postgraduates are only on campus for six months it was seen as more of a challenge, but it was recognised it is still relevant and efforts would be made to offer similar opportunities to them.

Queries were raised around the increased student intake reducing the amount of lab space that was available and it was asked what is being done to combat this. In response it was highlighted that the University has not increased student numbers for the last two years and is aiming to stabilise them. In the meantime facilities are being improved, there are plans to free up and create more space across campus but these plans do take time.

A particular issue was raised from the School of Management. Here they must choose to follow either a graduate or practise track in January which they start in June. It was mentioned that due to not hearing back from job offers by January this was too soon to make the decision and it was asked what could be done about this. The Pro Vice Chancellor discussed that the practise track was new and innovative and generally seemed a good alternative to the dissertation. If it is not working for

groups of students it was suggested the best course of action would be to contact the Director of Studies and see what they can offer.

It was asked what is being done at a University level to keep online abuse to a minimum and offer support to those affected. In response it was mentioned that there is a fully funded project being run by the University with a full time staff member looking at ways to combat this. Change has also been made in the way online unit evaluations are run so staff are not abused in that way. It was mentioned however that this is a social problem and not something the University was able to do a huge amount about, although they are aware of it and working on it. Support is available from student services and the SU for people struggling with online harassment.

In regards to the move from a modular to programme focused approach, it was asked how this would affect Social Sciences where the majority of modules are optional to allow for increased choice. In response it was recognised that it is important to keep things that are working and that it would fall to each department to make changes only in ways that would benefit them. However it was also recognised that there are other ways to incorporate choice, for example within modules and within programmes.

The problem of exam scaling was raised, especially in regards to Mathematics, and it was asked if information on what exams had been scaled could be given to students. The Pro Vice Chancellor replied that he was happy to look into this, talks are going forward to see how necessary scaling is and it remains how these can be made available to students.

Again the issue of Panopto was raised, with questions around what training and information is made available for staff as there seems to be confusion around reasons for using it, copyright breaches and ownership of videos. In response it was recognised that the use of Panopto is not as simple as it could be and systems are in place to make it more user friendly and simple. Reasons for why it is beneficial to use are made clear to staff in an effort to encourage more of them to use Panopto. In regards to copyright issues it was made clear is it not illegal to record lectures and this is more to do with fear of the unknown. As a solution The Pro Vice Chancellor said he would look into who owns the rights of these videos and include information about this in the training package.

An Academic Rep from Pharmacy discussed that in their new programme they had 30 contact hours a week and large assessment periods, meaning students felt this was much too intense. In response it was highlighted the large amount of contact hours was most likely due to covering topics needed for accreditation. However it was also recognised that this is a problem and the Pro Vice Chancellor ensured he would have discussions with relevant parties to aim to resolve this.

Issues were raised with accessing careers advice now the Careers Advice Service has been moved into the City, and also the problem that the service is very busy. In response it was highlighted there are many places on campus students can receive supports such as the SU and Student Services. Moving forward each department will have someone responsible for Careers within it on campus and this will be the main

person to offer support meaning there will be provision on campus as well as in the City. In the review it will also be addressed how to more effectively use staff so they are more available for meetings.

An issue specific to language courses was discussed, where by some exams require them to translate text but they are not allowed to bring dictionaries into these exams which would be beneficial. In response it was mentioned that this is the type of issue to be raised with the Director of Studies in light of the curriculum change, encouraging them to reconsider.

Finally it was asked what is being done to engage students who are not Academic Reps and don't provide feedback through various channels such as the SSLC. In response it was highlighted that there is a close working with the SU, although it is true this isn't the voice of all students. The new curriculum will aim to target a wide variety of students to receive feedback and measures will be taken to ensure the students approached are representative of all students, not just those who engage with the SU.

SU officer elections

The SU Education Officer mentioned that the election process is in motion. If Academic Reps are thinking about running they are encouraged to talk to someone in team Nominations are open until 23rd February but Reps are encouraged to start putting campaign in motion now as it can take time.

SU policy

The SU Education Officer informed that the first round of submissions for policy proposals has opened and closes Monday 20th November at Midday. This is your chance to submit ideas to change the way things are done that can become SU Policy.

Next meeting to be held Monday 4th December.