

Minutes

Meeting: Academic Council (Taught)
Place: 1W 2.101
Date and Time: Tuesday 1st December 2015 12.15pm – 1:05pm & 1:15pm – 2:05pm

Present: Lucy Woodcock Students' Union Education Officer
Peter Lambert Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)

Apologies: *Available as an appendix to minutes.*

In Attendance: Siobhan Silverstein, Academic Representation Coordinator
Amy Young, Engagement and Quality Coordinator
David Woolley, Departmental Representation Coordinator

1. Register for Attendance

Attendance register available as an appendix to minutes.

2. Apologies for Absence

All received noted in appendix.

3. Matters arising from previous minutes

None

4. Notice of Any Other Business (A.O.B)

None

5. Q & A Session: Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) Professor Peter Lambert

The SU Education Officer introduced the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching). The Pro-Vice Chancellor outlined his own role and the role of students in consultation. He noted the success of the University has been in part due to the relationship it has with the SU. In the past four months, progress has been made on a number of issues as a result from pressure by the SU. The Pro-Vice Chancellor mentioned that this was the last pilot year of anonymous marking and it will be fully rolled out starting in 2016. Due to low response rates, there has also been a change to the Online Unit Evaluation (OUE) system. Now there will be a fixed period during weeks ten and eleven for students to fill out evaluation forms in class. Staff must then publish the feedback for current and future students to see in order to improve transparency concerning evaluations. The Pro-Vice Chancellor explained a change to exam feedback which involves the roll out of a scheme where students can get feedback on exams with the permission of the Director of Studies.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor also noted that a working group has been established and is focused on looking at ways to improve group work. The prayer room will also be updated and redecorated. The National Student Survey will be made more student-centred for next year. The vital SSLC annual reports will influence the NSS strategy and University policy even more in the future. Additionally, starting at the beginning of the next academic year, a working group involving consultation with students will be formed to improve E-learning. The Pro-Vice Chancellor also discussed the lack of space on the University campus, which is one of the foremost issues on the University's agenda since it directly affects students. The University has invested in accommodation and new spaces including Manvers Street and is looking at ways to expand general teaching accommodation space, library, and café space.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor then invited questions from the floor:

Q: What is the SSLC report and who writes it?

- Each department produces a report at the end of the year, which the chair writes. The report covers the key issues that have come up or that has or has not been dealt with.
- The SSLC reports will be the starting point for the NSS strategies next year.

Q: Since surveys from Academic Reps do not receive high response rates, can the surveys be put on Moodle similar to Online Unit Evaluations?

- The student reps got feedback that if their surveys were on Moodle, more students would fill them out.
- Many reps are using surveys, but some only receive 35/200 responses.
- The Pro-Vice Chancellor explained that low response rates for OUEs have been addressed by having in-class feedback sessions, but he is happy to look into getting surveys on Moodle.

Q: When will study spaces off campus such as Manvers Street be accessible?

- The Pro-Vice Chancellor outlined the University's plans that involve the bottom floor of Manvers Street as a huge student study area.
- The Pro-Vice Chancellor was unsure of when it will open, but the police are moving out in December. Ideally service will move this academic year with the aim to be complete next year but there is no guarantee.
- The library is also working at creating learning spaces for students this year.

Q: What is the status of anonymous exam marking?

- Currently, coursework is marked anonymously where possible and departments decide where to apply. Despite technical issues during the trial period, these difficulties have been sorted out. Next year, there will be 100% anonymous marking across the University.
- There has been some resistance amongst staff, but the SU has pushed it forwards.
- The SU Education Officer advised Reps to raise this issue in their SSLCs.
- While some departments are aiming to be fully compliant, anonymous marking is being rolled out at different speeds in different faculties.

Q: Can the exam period scheduled in January be changed?

- A student from the Department of Management commented that they had four exams in four days and over half of the cohort had issues with this as well.
- The Pro-Vice Chancellor highlighted the difficulty of timetabling exams given the amount of optional units. Potential changes include alternative forms of assessments, downsizing the number of exams, or addressing whether students actually need exams in first year. He noted that the University is too exam assessment heavy and over

Q: Are steps being taken towards reducing exams?

- The Pro-Vice Chancellor outlined the process of changing things: SSLC to DLTQC to FLTQC, etc. Any changes have to change unit descriptions which have to go through various committees. From a learning and teaching point of view, The Pro-Vice Chancellor stated that he wanted to move away from an assessment heavy workload, but it will take at least a couple of years to change.

Q: Is it possible to merge units across the year, such as combining two six credit units into one twelve credit unit that runs the whole year?

- Some departments are already doing this, which allows for different types of assessments. The key to this is formative assessment. 100% exam with no formative assessment will not be allowed.

Q: What are the guidelines for giving feedback on a 100% exam assessed module?

- Different departments will approach this issue differently, but there has to be some kind of formative feedback in which the students are involved and aware of.
- The SU Education Officer asked that Reps send any examples to her if they are not getting formative feedback and the Pro-Vice Chancellor also encouraged Reps to raise this issue at SSLCs, DLTQCs, etc.

Q: Would formative feedback take place before the exam?

- Starting next year, the University is requiring all lecturers to have mid-point informal feedback to help improve the unit during the semester.

Q: What can be done about the congestion in the Postgraduate centre?

- The Pro-Vice Chancellor is aware of the issues of provisions for postgraduate and stated that the University would be freezing undergraduate numbers.

Q: Has there been any recent changes about exams being cancelled or if it snows?

- There are all kinds of provisions in place, but if there were 2 weeks of snow, plans would change.
- Exams would not go into the inter-semester break. If there were going to be weekend exams, the University would let students know well in advance.

Q: How can students get feedback before submitting coursework that is 100% assessed?

- The student has a 100% individual mini dissertation for a six credit module. The Pro-Vice Chancellor advised the student to take go to the unit convener and take advantage of office hours to get feedback on outline of assignment as well. This issue could also be raised in online unit evaluations to make changes in the course for the future.

Q: A BBA student asked, how is the University going to move forward with the group work process?

- Group work is managed differently by different faculties. A Working Group will look at creating some guidelines.
- The SU Education Officer notes that a one size fits all policy is not effective across faculties, so the focus should be on collecting examples, and setting up guidelines and overarching principles to level the playing field and sharing good practice.

Q: When will the Milner Centre for Evolution be opened?

- The Pro-Vice Chancellor stated he did not know, but he will find out and let the SU Education Officer know.

Q: What is the status of addressing the issue of library?

- The SU Education Officer noted there is a Working Group set up to address this and there is a constant process of opening more space and improving.
- There is an option of creating extra study space around campus during exam periods.
- The Vice Chancellor is having a tour of the library due to pressure from students and as a step to address this issue.

Q: The campus is being expanded for accommodation and work space. What about accommodation in town?

- The Pro-Vice Chancellor explained that there are issues this year due to both Bath Spa's expansion in numbers and changes to legislation about houses of multiple occupancy. The University and Senior Management team are looking into this issue.

Q: What are the guidelines around announcing graduation dates so that students can book flights? What are the PG induction dates?

- Students should be told by email the dates in the beginning of semester two.
- The Pro-Vice Chancellor answered they will be in the 1st or 2nd week of December.

Q: Can pedestrian crossings at the back of campus by the Combe down entrance be put into place due to the high curbs?

- The Pro-Vice Chancellor said that he would raise the issue to get it addressed.

6. Report from the SU Education Officer

The SU Education Officer informed Reps of the Volunteer Recognition Scheme that allows students to record multiple activities and volunteering roles. There are three stages of the award: bronze, silver, and gold and the deadline is December 10th. She also noted that Policy voting on the 5 submissions is open until Friday, December 4th. There is also a three day development opportunity for women happening throughout ISB and the SU Education Officer encouraged those interested to apply. The Sports performance conference is on January 22nd free for students. Pertaining to the library, the SU Education Officer noted that new furniture and seating space will be added to Level 2. She is also working on the issue of Groupwork and encouraged those who wanted to get involved to get in contact with her. As for exam feedback, all students will receive generic feedback from 2016/17 and onwards. The Online Unit Evaluations are happening in weeks 10 or 11 with full participation of all departments starting next year.

7. Report from Academic Exec

The SU Education Officer will send the Academic Exec report to the Reps.

8. Printing

The University is currently reviewing its printing practices as many deem the prices as too expensive to use. Several Reps noted additions to printing services could include: stapling, reduction of minimum payment on printing cards, added printing credit at the beginning of each year especially considering increased fees, addressing constant breakdown of machines to add money on cards at the beginning of the semester, and getting rid of paper submission as it would take away student costs as well as decrease environmental impact. Advertisement on the bottom of non-assessed printing was discussed and most Reps in the room agreed it was a good idea as it would be free and most printing done is notes for class.

9. Cross campus PC issues

A Rep noted it would be good to have a small printer in each accommodation building as many students buy printers for use in their accommodation. The SU Education Officer noted that when Manvers Street opens, there will be printers and there is a new printer in the Chancellor's building as well. When printers crash, there should be more flexibility in the submission of hard-copies. The SU Education Officer noted electronic submissions were part of the Top Ten last year, but it currently depends on each department. The SU is continuing to push and work on this issue.

10. Any Other Business

None

11. Date, Time and Venue of next meeting: Monday 8th February 12.15 &13.15 Room TBC