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**Meeting:** Taught Academic Council  
**Place:** 3WN 3.7  
**Date and Time:** Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016 12.15 – 14.05

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**Present:** Ben Davies Students' Union Education Officer  
Professor Peter Lambert Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)

**Attending:** Jack Kitchen UG Faculty Rep: Management  
Romi Levy UG Faculty Rep: Management  
Michaela Duta UG Faculty Rep: Humanities and Social Sciences  
Amy Young Representation and Engagement Manager  
Annika Theilgaard Academic Representation Co-ordinator  
David Woolley Departmental Representation Co-ordinator  
Greg Croft Representation Assistant  
Cheryl Ang Representation Assistant (minutes)

**Apologies:** *Available as an appendix to minutes.*

**Action****1. Register of Attendance**

Attendance register available as an appendix to minutes.

**2. Matters arising**

None

**3. Notice of any other business (A.O.B.)**

There was no other business.

#### 4. Report by the Students' Union Education Officer

The SU Education Officer updated the Reps on several issues:

National Demo: The SU Officer team attended the National Demo organised by NUS and UCU on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The Demo brought up issues regarding reforms to Further Education colleges, the Higher Education bill and student debt. Fifty-three people from Bath (University of Bath, Bath Spa University and UCU) attended. In total, 8000 people participated in the rally. The government has made key amendments to the original HE bill:

- The Office for Students board will now have a designated student representative
- Publication of student protection plans
- Greater reporting requirements on access and retention
- Clarity on postgraduate training provision

While we celebrate these amendments, the SU Education Officer also highlighted the need to push for student representatives on all stages of the decision-making process. In addition, the government stands by the proposal to link tuition fees with the Teaching Excellence Framework. The HE bill will receive its second reading in the House of Lords.

Academic Council: At the moment, Taught Academic Council is offered to both UGs and PGTs. Building on the success of the first PGT Academic Council held on 22 November, the structure of Taught Academic Councils will be changed – separate Academic Councils will be conducted for UGs and PGTs.

Interactive Feedback Sessions: There will be more interactive feedback sessions next semester. For instance, Academic Councils will be held in flat teaching rooms to facilitate group discussions led by Faculty Reps.

Academic Reps Moodle Page: Changes have been made to the Moodle page. Reps can easily access the agendas, minutes and presentations for Academic Council. A template has also been introduced for reps to input good practice/wins and issues faced in departments.

Policy Proposal: The SU is currently undergoing a policy proposal round. Nine policies are open for student voting. For policy-proposals to be adopted as policy, the vote must achieve a simple majority with at least a 2% quorum. Voting will open on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and close on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016. More details can be found at:

<https://www.bathstudent.com/policy-governance/>

## 5. Placement Hub

On being asked, most Academic Reps reported that they have heard of the Placement Hub though few Reps have used it. The SU plans to heavily promote the Placement Hub. Placement teams will be feeding in placement information from second years with their permission. The information will facilitate students to look for housemates in the area. The Placement Hub also comprises of forums, advice and support from University or the SU, information on placements abroad and a system to rate the placement provider. The Placement Hub can be found at <https://www.bathstudent.com/placement/>

## 6. Volunteer Recognition Scheme

The Volunteer Recognition Scheme was introduced to thank students who have volunteered their time and reward them for their work. It is currently open for application till 15<sup>th</sup> January. There are three tiers of awards: Gold, Silver and Bronze. Academic Reps are eligible for the award with their role. The SU Education Officer highly recommends Reps to apply for it at <https://www.bathstudent.com/vrs/>

## 7. Drop-in Session

The SU Education Officer and the Academic Representation Co-ordinator will be conducting a drop-in session on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at CB 4.10 from 12 – 2pm. Reps are welcomed to drop in and discuss any problems that they are facing, how to bring up issues, find out more about the SU Education Officer's work and share any wins in their departments.

## 8. Report from Academic Executive

The SU Education Officer introduced the Academic Executive which comprises of Faculty Reps and Senate Rep. The Academic Exec meets every 2 weeks to discuss issues. He invited members of the Academic Exec to share their work over the past semester and future plans.

Science: At the recent Board of Studies, the Faculty of Science decided to stop having loose paper during exams. This is in line with the practice of other Faculties and School. However, Faculty Reps will be following up on this as they understand that some departments are more affected by the change than others.

School of Management: Faculty Reps have attended the SLTQC. They have discussed the options for placements – the school is currently looking at the possibility to engage with international placement providers. Faculty Reps informed Academic Reps that Accounting and Finance was involved in a pilot of a new personal tutoring system last year – personal tutors had to record their meetings with their tutees on SAMIS, but students are not given access to the records. The system will be rolled out to the School of Management this year. Faculty Reps encouraged Academic Reps to gather feedback on the personal tutoring system. In addition, Faculty Reps have noted that students are not informed of the outcomes of unit evaluations. The School will be creating a central Moodle page for students to view the results of unit evaluation and the lecturers' comments.

Humanities and Social Sciences: Faculty Reps have brought up the issue of unclear guidelines surrounding assessment offences. They have also highlighted hidden costs for students, which will be followed up with a campaign by the Academic Exec in second semester. In addition, Faculty Reps stated that departments are removing optional modules in the first semester of the first year. They will be clarifying which departments are adopting the change with immediate effect and which departments are still deliberating over it.

Engineering and Design: Faculty Reps mentioned that students in Engineering struggle with receiving constructive and timely feedback. Upon asked, Academic Reps replied that some departments are particularly affected by the issue (e.g. Computer Science, Maths). Moreover, some lecturers do not update students on when they will receive their feedback or the reason behind the delay. Faculty Reps are also following up on the issue of Panopto, as well as a standardised structure for Moodle pages.

Academic Reps are reminded to join the Facebook group of each Faculty. The SU Education officer updated Reps that the Academic Exec will be leading campaigns next semester on issues such as Panopto and hidden costs. He informed Reps that there will be shadowing opportunities on the Exec next semester.

## 9. Q & A Session: Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) introduced himself and thanked Academic Reps for standing for the role. He would like to discuss what the University has been working on and issues that Rep may have. This is in line with the spirit of student engagement to enhance learning and teaching.

He informed Reps on a few key issues:

Higher Education Changes: A white paper has been produced emphasising student choice and accuracy of information available for students. Universities now come under the Competition Markets Authority. The White Paper proposed to create more competition by clearing the path for new providers such as private universities. In addition, the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) has been suggested to promote quality assurance. The University is aware that the NUS and Students' Union have taken a stance on the TEF. While the University understands the reasons behind the objection, it has taken a decision to be part of the TEF. TEF puts the spotlight on learning and teaching, even more so than the NSS. Even though TEF is linked to an increase in student fees, it will help the University improve in the long-run. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) urged students to objectively review their experiences and programmes. The feedback provided will not only aid future generations of students, but also benefit current students in the future as well. It should be noted that the paper has not passed through parliament, and the University will not make any changes till then.

National Student Survey: The University generally performs well on the NSS. However, there is still room for improvement. Students have provided poor feedback on the library's adequacy for students' needs. The University has created learning commons this year in 6WS and 6E. In semester 2, there will be new learning commons set up in Manvers Street and potentially Norwood House. There are also discussions on the possibility of extending the library. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) emphasised that they are working closely with the library, but there may not be immediate changes.

Degree Scheme Review: The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) explained that departments used to carry out a Degree Scheme Review every 5 years of a programme. It was a self-evaluation document that aimed to identify areas for improvements. However, the University found that the Degree Scheme Review does not facilitate necessary changes at times. Thus, the University is replacing this system. Programmes and departments will be identified for review based on feedback from the NSS. The University will be consulting departments on the way programmes are run. For instance, the University has questioned the need for assessments in the first semester of the first year. A possible change would be to focus on bridging the gap between college and university, as well as areas such as independent learning, skills provision and employability.

Centre for Learning and Teaching: A new Centre for Learning and Teaching was launched. It comprises of 4 teams:

- Academic Staff Development
- Technology Enhanced Learning (formerly e-learning)
- Student Engagement
- Curriculum Development

Skills Centre: There is a new Skills Centre combining MASH, Academic Skills and Foreign Language Centre.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) opened up the floor to any questions from Reps.

**Q: The University is planning for the future, but on what scale is this? Civil Engineering and Architecture has a new building but it will be overcapacity in 4 years. Student numbers in all departments are increasing.**

**A:** The situation in Civil Engineering and Architecture is new to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching). The University has stabilised undergraduate numbers last year. The increases in student numbers may be in the pipeline by the department, or an increase in distance-learning and postgraduates. The University recognises that the campus and the city is stretched at its capacity. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) will find out about the situation in Civil Engineering and Architecture and get back to students through the SU Education Officer.

**Q: Is the University stabilising absolute student numbers or rate of growth?**

**A:** The University is stabilising absolute numbers.

**Q: Why is it different for postgraduates?**

**A:** Some postgraduates do distance-learning or blended learning. They have a different impact on campus. While there is an increase in postgraduate numbers, they are not to the extent of undergraduate numbers in the past. There will not be plans for significant increase in student numbers until more facilities are available to accommodate students.

**Q: Could you elaborate on Norwood House serving as a learning commons?**

**A:** It is dependent on the move of Manvers Street which is due to open in late February. It is hoped that Norwood House could be transformed into a learning commons in time for the summer exams. However, new furniture will not be in place immediately.

**Q: If Manvers Street is a success, will you look to expand more in the city or on campus?**

**A:** The problem with expansion on campus is limited land. There is potential in bath, not only in the city centre. Going forward, it is likely that the University will be looking to expand more in the city.



**Q: The FLC provides good opportunity to learn new languages. Why has funding been cut for the FLC?**

**A:** Funding has not been cut for the FLC and it may be increased. The University has reviewed classes offered by the FLC and noticed that some classes were running with less than 5 students. The University's policy states that teaching should not be carried out in a class of less than 15 students. There is a need for consistency between teaching by the FLC and departments in the University. Furthermore, FLC did not offer a curriculum to students. There is a need for a curriculum to be set up in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This increases the employability of students as the course is recognised. In addition, teachers in the FLC would need to be qualified.

**Q: A rep disagreed that the language provision by FLC has not been reduced. Some stages of languages are no longer available. The consultation with students on the issue of FLC has been less than adequate. The petition against the decision by the University gathered thousands of signatures. Some students chose University of Bath because of the language provision. Do you think it is fair to break that promise?**

**A:** The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) understands where the Rep is coming from. However, the University does not promise the provision of language – it is stated “where available”. Languages at higher stages are still offered in community classes. In addition, consultations were held according to the standard 30-day period. There were some false information on the petition. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) has reviewed all emails that went alongside the petition. He is heartened by the strong response as it reaffirms the University's commitment to language provision.

**Q: Student athletes currently have Wednesday afternoons free to take part in sports. However, if there is an event away from Bath, students have to miss the morning lectures on Wednesday. Could there be more support for student athletes, such as Panopto for Wednesday lectures?**

**A:** Wednesday mornings could be kept free of lectures if the University has unlimited space. However, there are already issues with timetabling due to space constraints. The University is investing £250,000 in Panopto and it will be in place next year. The new system will make it easier for staff and students to access.

**Q: Could you make the use of Panopto compulsory?**

**A:** It is tricky to make the use of Panopto compulsory due to legal concerns and backlash. Panopto use has increased 40% last year and 70% this semester. Instead of direct confrontation, the best way to push for Panopto is through peer pressure and pressure from students. Students are recommended to speak to their lecturers. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) also stated that lecturers have questioned why students are allowed to miss classes. It is about achieving the balance between the two.

**Q: Why has the University been slow to adopt Panopto? Other Universities have been recording lectures for many years. Some departments (e.g. Pharmacy and Maths) have completely rejected the idea of Panopto.**

**A:** The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) thanked past students for providing feedback on recording lectures, which initiated Panopto in the University. He has taken note of the departments and will be following up on the issue with them.

**Q: Six years ago, not many lecturers use Moodle. Currently, most lecturers use Moodle. Could any parallels be made?**

**A:** The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) thanked the student for pointing this out. Change is a long-term process and applying pressure now would be for the common good in the future. The use of Moodle is still not ideal and the University is promoting training for staff.

**Q: Regarding TEF, the understanding is that universities are allowed to increase the fees by a certain level. Would the University take advantage of it?**

**A:** The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) emphasised that TEF has not been passed as legislation yet. The increase in fees will likely be tied to inflation. However, there will be other considerations such as what other universities do. Everything is uncertain at the moment and no decisions have been made.

**Q: Will TEF affect international students who are already paying higher fees?**

**A:** The tuition fees for international students are decided by a separate system.



**Q: With TEF in place, education will be regarded more as a commodity. Students will expect better quality of teaching. Will lecturers feel more pressured?**

**A:** Lecturers generally do not regard education as a commodity. They are working out of passion for the subject. Students do have a right to expect good education. Similarly, staff members have a right to expect a level of responsibility from students. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) believes that TEF will put the spotlight on the University to provide high-quality education. However, commodification will not occur on a local level.

## **10. Any Other Business**

Please send notification prior to the meeting at [academicreps@bath.ac.uk](mailto:academicreps@bath.ac.uk)

## **11. Next Meeting**

Date: Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February

Time: 12.15pm and 1.15pm

Location: 1W 2.101