University of Bath Students' Union

Minutes

Meeting:	Taught Academic Council
Place:	1W 2.101
Date and Time:	Monday 12th February 2017 12.15 – 14.05

Present:	Ben Davies	Students' Union Education Officer
Attending:	Amy Young	Representation and Engagement Manager
	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.

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

4. Report by the Students' Union Education Officer

The SU Education Officer welcomed Academic Reps to the first Academic Council in the second semester. There is a change in the format of Academic Council, with the aim of obtaining more feedback from Reps. The SU Education Officer asked Reps to write down anything they have achieved at SSLCs, unresolved issues, good practices at SSLCs and what they want to change over the next few months in their role (refer to Appendix A)

He then updated the Reps on several issues:

4.1) Increase in Fees: With the TEF, the University is allowed to increase fees in line with inflation. The SU has managed to secure assurance from the University that the increase in fees will only affect new undergraduate students, i.e. current students will not be affected by the increase in fees.

4.2) Refresh Week: Refresh Week is currently ongoing, with various fairs throughout the week such as Societies Fair and Commercial Fair. Students are encouraged to join new clubs and attend taster sessions for societies and sports.

4.3) Feedback Tracking: The SU Education Officer and the Representation Team were in Bournemouth to view the Feedback Tracker Issue System that they have in place. It is an online system which makes it easy for students to submit feedback throughout the semester. It will also provide Academic Reps, the SU and University staff access to the feedback. The SU is hoping to obtain this system for the start of next academic year.

4.4) TEF Submission: The University has submitted its application for TEF on 26th January. Results will be published in May.

4.5) TOP 10: The SU Education Officer updated Reps that he has taken the issue of **Personal Tutoring** to the Senate. A steering group has been set up comprising of staff across various faculties. There will be a focus on improving the structure and content of personal tutoring. Personal tutors should also be able to signpost students to other services in the University for pastoral care.

A task group has been set up to investigate better **waste disposal** system and alternative ways of waste disposal. In terms of **housing**, the council are looking into Purpose Built Student Accommodation in town, ensuring that they are affordable and appropriate for students. The SU Postgraduate Officer is working on the issue of **PG Isolation**, particularly surrounding mental health and wellbeing. In addition, he has secured longer hours for Parade Bar on Fridays in order to improve **out of term time provision**. The SU is also working on a paper on **University Guarantor Agreement** to lobby for the University to act as a guarantor for international students.

4.6) Study Space: The SU Education Officer introduced Reps to an upcoming interactive student portal called "myday". It will include multiple dashboards (e.g. availability of computers, library fines, University news) and will be mobile enabled as well. The SU team is in the process of securing agreement from the University planning team and obtaining funding for it. There will also be a platform to map available spaces in the University integrated into the student portal. The SU Education Officer asked Reps to write whether they think it is a good idea and what they would like to see from the portal. Most Reps thought that it was a good idea. They would like features such as available study spaces, printer credits, buses, SU events (including societies and sports), skills sessions, job vacancies, lecture timetable and exam timetable, calendar and deadlines, campus map, student forums, Outlook as well as the opening times and real-time crowd data of bars, shops and eateries. Reps stated the importance of the dashboard – clean interface and customisability. They also suggested having support for multiple languages. However, there were concerns on the integration with Moodle and SAMIS as Reps commented on the high number of university-related websites. Reps also highlighted that the information presented should be automatically updated. A full list of student feedback can be found in Appendix B.

4.7) Awards Evening: The SU Education Officer informed the Reps that the event this year will be on a larger scale. It will be combined with the University Teaching Awards for the first time, which will provide more funding for the event. An Academic Rep nomination form will be circulated in order to shortlist Reps who have made exceptional contributions. Nominations would require as much detail as possible. Academic Reps are requested to spread the message to their cohort.

The Awards Evening typically takes place every year at the Claverton Rooms. This year, there are two potential venues to host the awards ceremony – Hilton Hotel (2nd May) or Guildhall (9th May). Around 80% of Academic Reps voted for Hilton Hotel

5. Virgil Building

The Virgil Building on Manvers Street has opened on 6 February. Students can access Careers Service, Joblink, Student Services, Finance and Widening Participation Office at the new building. The Learning Commons will be opening on 20 February. It will include independent and group study spaces, a University networked IT suite, training rooms and a library book-drop service. This will be opened on weekends, providing students with an alternative learning space in the city.

6.   NSS Boycott

In December, a University of Bath Students' Union policy was passed, mandating that the SU campaign to Boycott the National Student Survey. If less than 50% of eligible students (i.e. final year students) do not fill it in, it will affect the University's rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework. More information can be found here.

Academic Reps are encouraged to spread the message of boycotting the NSS to final year students. Some possible ways to stop the emails asking students to fill in the NSS are:

a) Change your email settings so the emails go into your junk box
b) Reply and ask them to stop sending you them
c) You can opt out by using the final footer link on the NSS website

Some Reps raised questions regarding the NSS boycott:

Q: Why should we boycott the NSS if the University has already submitted an application for TEF?

A: A boycott this year will have an effect for future years.

Q: Departments have been requesting for Academic Reps to encourage final year students to complete the NSS. The results from the NSS are useful as indicators to gauge performance during SSLCs. As Academic Reps, it would be in our interest to promote it.

A: There will be alternative avenues to obtain data from students, e.g. the SU will be producing our own survey, replicating the NSS questions. In addition, the UK Engagement Survey provides feedback on student engagement as well.

Q: What is the typical completion rate for NSS?

A: The completion rate was 76% last year.

Q: Isn't the NSS extremely important for the reputation of the University?

A: NSS makes up one factor of the University's reputation. There are other factors such as research and employability. Boycotting the NSS is a short-term measure intended to convey a strong student voice to the University.

Q: What is the benefit of boycotting the NSS instead of rating it badly?

A: If you sabotage NSS results, it will have more of a negative impact on the University's reputation. The University can also filter out sabotage responses.

7.   Elections

The SU Education Officer informed Reps that elections for SU Officer are coming up. Nominations will close on 22nd February. The voting period is from 28th February to 2nd March. Results will be released on 3rd March. The period of SU Officer Elections have been shortened due to feedback from past years. The SU Education Officer asked Reps if all SU Officer roles should be allowed to post on Facebook groups. Currently, only the SU President, SU Education Officer and SU Postgraduate Officer are allowed. Around 70% of Reps prefer to stick with the status quo instead of allowing all SU Officers to post on Facebook groups. Elections for Exec Committees and Faculty roles will soon follow in March.

There will be a training session on 13th February at 1E 3.6 conducted by the SU President for students who are interested in running for elections.

8.   Feedback Session

Reps were asked to get into groups and discuss the issue of feedback provided to students.

Good examples of feedback
- Personal feedback
- Providing data on how students do in exam questions (e.g. Civil Engineering)
- Feedback hours (either individually or in small groups)
- Going over ideal answers in lectures
- Lectures catered to addressing mistakes often made by students in exam/coursework and how to avoid making the same mistakes
- Generic feedback from previous years
- Annotated feedback on essay given back on Moodle
- Excel document sent to everyone with all grades and comments
- In languages – grammar corrections given in all essays
- Suggest further reading
- Link back to previous reports and outline how you've improved and what you still need to work on
- Stop/Start/Continue feedback sheets

Bad examples of feedback
- Timing (often later than 3 weeks)
- Mismatched feedback and marks
- Vague and generic feedback which doesn't say what is wrong or how to improve
- Identical feedback
- No feedback at all (e.g. Electrical MSc, Pharmacology and Biology, Chemistry)
  - Ticks only on the criteria sheet (no written comments)
  - Numerical grades only
  - In some instances, marks only received the next academic year

- Purely negative comments
- No answers for past exam papers
- Can't see your own coursework/paper to see where you've gone wrong (e.g. Chemical Engineering)
- Handwritten course work that have to be posted in rather than submitted on Moodle (e.g. SPS)
- Inconsistency between markers
- Staggered release of feedback (e.g. Biological ethics)

Ideal feedback
- Timely
  - o Especially before the next coursework is due
- Detailed and specific
  - o Pointing out what and where you should have done something instead of negatives
- Discussion meetings
  - o 1 on 1 meetings
  - o Face to face meetings
- Have small scale practice assignment initially in order to improve gradually
- Grade on the performance regardless of whether it affects final grade
- Being able to apply feedback from one piece of coursework to another
- Clearer time frame on when feedback will be returned
- Examples of high scoring course work
- Annotated feedback throughout
- Range and average of marks after it is marked
- Structured approach to feedback that mimics grading criteria

Reasonable feedback
- Providing mark schemes and explain marking criteria
- Within 2 or 3 weeks
- Pointing out what to improve in future assignments - concrete constructive comments/suggestions (some professors in School of Management adopted this type of feedback, but students would appreciate longer comments on how to improve their future work)
  - o Students understand that longer feedback would require more time
- How to improve a good grade, e.g. 70 and above
- Lectures on feedback for the cohort after assignment (not all assignments)
- Send an overview of course's feedback to be able to situate work
- Stylistic guidance
- Extra support given to students who scores particularly badly consistently
- Staff should email students when results have been posted

9.   Any Other Business

Please send notification prior to the meeting at academicreps@bath.ac.uk

10.   Next Meeting

Date: Monday 6th March
Time: 12.15pm and 1.15pm
Location: CB 3.9