Minutes

Meeting:	**Academic Council (Taught)**
Place:	1W 2.101
Date and Time:	Friday 11th March 12.15pm – 1:05pm & 1:15pm – 2:05pm

Present:	Lucy Woodcock	Students' Union Education Officer

Apologies:	*Available as an appendix to minutes.*

In Attendance:	Tommy Parker, Representation Assistant (minutes)
	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

3.1 SU Policies: In the last policy round there were 13 policies submitted of which 11 passed. The policies to not pass were "Shutdown Yarlswood" and "Blurred Lines". Full information of the policies can be found on
http://www.bathstudent.com/your-union/meetings/policies/incoming/

3.2 Panopto: There have been some issues with Panopto, and the Education Officer has met with key stakeholders from departments with low usage rates and is meeting with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching specifically on this issue.

3.3 Credits: The Education Officer has forwarded on the views gathered about credit weightings of units to the relevant committees.

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

    None

5. **Report from the SU Education Officer**

    5.1 Education Strategy Workshops: The University is running workshops on their new Education Strategy to get feedback from academic reps about how the University can develop learning and teaching provision.

    5.2 Academic Rep Awards: This year the Academic Rep Awards Evening will be on Thursday 14th April in the Claverton Rooms with a social afterwards in the Tub.

    5.3 NSS: The National Student Survey (NSS) is currently open. This is for final years and reps are encouraged to do the survey as well as encourage other final years. Currently the submission rates are on the same level as last year but vary between departments.

    5.4 Officer Elections: The SU has just elected its new officers, with the addition of the role of Postgraduate Officer. A record voter turnout happened and was higher than Bath Spa's elections. The Education Officer thanked all those that got involved and voted.

    5.5 Fossil Fuels Divestment: An Academic rep is currently running a campaign for the university to divest from fossil fuels, and work on more renewable initiatives as well as fun research in this area. If reps want to get involved contact lw567@bath.ac.uk

    5.6 Top 10: The Education Officer gave a summary of work that has been done so far on the Top 10.
    The Library has new furniture on level 2 to maximise space usage, however level 5 of the Library is currently out of bounds due to a roof leak that will be fixed shortly. The Education Officer also submitted a paper on library space to Council, Senate, Students' Union (CSSU) and has also been working on campaigns such as moving towards more e-journals, refurbishment plans as well as a potential extension on the Library building.
    Online Unit Evaluations are now mobile compatible and have received higher completion rates this year. Unit convenors will now be collating feedback on reporting back to students on what they have done to improve the course through SSLC's or by Moodle.
    The Education Officer has created a "Group Work Working Group" who are working on a set of principles for group work as well as sharing good practice.

These are designed to be flexible to guide how group work is conducted in departments.

From 2016/17 all departments will be providing generic exam feedback on all courses. The SU is now working towards getting courses to provide more personalised exam feedback.

The prayer room in Norwood House is being renovated.

Mental Health provision has been improved within the University, with an improved counselling submission form and faster referral times.

5.7 SSLC Annual Reports: The chairs of all SSLCs, both student and staff chairs, will be soon writing an annual report. This report will be an overview of the year, containing both good practice and areas to improve. These reports will then be collated into a report written by the Education Officer 2016/17 to present to the university. The current Education Officer is currently adapting the template to make it more user friendly and this will be circulated to the Chairs and Secretaries. It is the chair's responsibility to write up the report but reps should get involved with the process and provide feedback to make the report as comprehensive as possible. If student chairs have any questions they should contact the relevant SSLC secretary. **ACTION: Education Officer to email template to SSLC chairs and secretaries.**

6. **Discussion Topic: Personal Tutors**

The Education Officer asked reps to provide feedback on the current Personal Tutor System. This will then be fed back to the university to improve. Points raised and current practice discussed were:

- A 2nd year Academic Rep from Computer Science have never met their personal tutor.
- An Electrical Engineering Academic Rep has a couple of meeting a semester with their personal tutor per semester.
- A Maths Academic Rep only have meetings when necessary, and has had issues with the personal tutor not supporting the student during illness as well as issue when they leave to go on sabbatical.
- Mechanical Engineering Rep had regular meetings with their personal tutor in the first year, but after that no more meetings were organised. Also issues with understanding the remit of the personal tutor role, is it pastoral or academic or both.
- Electrical Engineering rep had a good relationship with their personal tutor who helped on both pastoral and academic issues. Their personal tutor regularly schedules in meetings and supports on any issues with modules.
- Social Science 1st year rep had a good relationship with their personal tutor but has to schedule in the meetings, but when they do the personal tutor makes time to meet and support them.

- Mechanical Engineering 1st year rep for the first semester had a scheduled meeting, with the first half primarily pastoral and the second more academic focused.
- Chemical Engineering, Final year rep in their first year their personal tutor was abroad and therefore not on campus and then weren't informed that their personal tutor had left the university.
- Economics final year rep mentioned disparity of whether personal tutors were good or not within the department, with some been keen and some just doing it as they have to.
- Psychology 2nd year rep has a very good personal tutor that they meet with regularly and goes over exam results.
- Architecture 2nd year mentioned that their students only get 1 personal tutor for the entire year cohort, resulting in communication issues and the tutor taking a long time to respond to emails. This was brought up in SSLC but the Director of Studies suggested bringing it up with the personal tutor.
- Biology have an issue with their personal tutor designated to support them in an academic project, but their personal tutors own field of study may not align with the project the student is working on. **ACTION: Biology reps to email Education Officer on current situation and issues.**
- Politics Final year rep primarily goes to personal tutor on pastoral issues rather than academic support.
- Natural Science 1st goes to their personal tutor for pastoral support and not academic as they are from a different department to the reps specialisations.

It was also discussed how the current practice is to put personal tutors down as a reference when applying for jobs. Although this is the current suggested practice, the Education Officer suggested finding the most appropriate member of staff within the University for a reference due to varying levels of contact between personal tutor and students.

It was also discussed how Masters students in the School of Management don't have personal tutors and instead are supported by Student Experience Officers. Some reps preferred the personal tutor system than the current practice and the Education Officer suggested that reps contact them on more personalised feedback. **ACTION: Management Masters reps to contact Education Officer.**

The Education Officer then asked about what reps think the most appropriate balance of workload should be between the student and the personal tutor. Points raised include:

- Reps mentioned a 50:50 split in workload is the ideal situation as it is important for the personal tutor to show interest. If the burden of workload is too much in either direction it could cause issues.
- Mechanical Engineering final year rep have their personal tutor email every year reminding students that they are still their if the students need them.
- Psychology first year rep has their personal tutor email regularly to students and this was highlighted as good practice.

- Mechanical Engineering Final year reps personal tutor keeps in contact with the student, but doesn't comment on academic progress which could be beneficial.
- Psychology second year rep has appointment times that students can book. Mentioned that the personal tutor may not know when issues arise so it is important that the student is proactive and goes to see their tutor when they need them.
- Biology Second year rep doesn't receive regular email updates as they aren't necessary as they meet with their personal tutor regularly on academic support.
- Psychology currently do a group work project with their personal tutor to build the relationship from the beginning that has proven to be beneficial to students.

Overall reps mentioned that after first year, it is better for the student to seek the personal tutor for a meeting when support is needed, but regular communication from them can be beneficial.

The Education Officer suggested that any more comments or feedback on the current personal tutor system will be welcomed and can be emailed to them on sueducation@bath.ac.uk

7. **Discussion topic: Exam Feedback**

The Education Officer started the discussion to receive feedback on the current practice in place across departments and units on how students are given feedback on exams. Points raised include:
- Reps rarely are told when modules are scaled and are sometimes blocked from receiving original marks due to scaling. The Education Officer informed reps on the background on this issue and how now reps can ask their faculty reps on scaling as it is discussed at FLTQC. Reps mentioned that when this is brought up as some SSLC's the discussion is shut down by some staff members. Politics students brought up that a module was scaled down by 9 marks but received no reason for this.
- Engineering have some feedback that discusses the questions which isn't as useful as feedback on the answers students gave, and it would be useful to have it standardised across units as some are better than others.
- Electrical Engineering where shown graphs of the average and spread of marks to understand how well the cohort is doing. Also a rep highlighted that their exam feedback is broken down into sections that is very useful and highlighted as good practice.
- Psychology first year rep was provided no exam feedback even if something contributes to a large proportion of the final grade.
- Some reps are told personalised feedback is impossible as there are too many students on a course.
- Biology discussed exam results with tutor but the student had to bring it up first.
- Computer Science rep had comprehensive exam feedback but it was a long time after the original exam so had less use and impact.

- Some reps received feedback before results which added on extra unnecessary pressure.
- Maths currently provide generic feedback on all modules.
- Reps mentioned it would be useful to see the distribution of marks so students know how well they are currently doing.

Overall reps mentioned that personalised feedback is preferred but generic feedback is a good first step. Any other comments or suggestions should be emailed to the Education Officer on sueducation@bath.ac.uk.

8. Any Other Business

None

9. Date, Time and Venue of next meeting: 21st April at 12:15 & 13:15 in TBC