# Minutes

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| **Meeting:** | **Academic Council (Taught)** |
| **Place:** | 1W 2.101 |
| **Date and Time:** | Thursday 18th February 2016 12.15pm – 1:05pm & 1:15pm – 2:05pm |

Present:   Lucy Woodcock, Students' Union Education Officer

Apologies:   *Available as an appendix to minutes.*

In Attendance:   David Woolley, Departmental Representation Coordinator

Oli Schofield, Peer Support Coordinator
Janani Rasarathinam, Representation Assistant

## 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

Education Officer reported back answers from Peter Lambert for unanswered questions from the question and answer session. The question and answers were:
- **Q:** When will the Milner Centre for evolution be opened?
  - It is estimated that the Milner Centre will open around Nov 2017
- **Q:** When will Graduation dates be announced?
  - It will take place on Tuesday 29th, Wednesday 30th and Thursday 31st of June.
  - Date of specific ceremonies will be confirmed at the end of March. Education Officer is trying to push this to mid-March.
- **Q:** Is it possible to put pedestrian crossings at the back of campus by the Combe down entrance due to high kerbs

- The University has been involved in the discussions with the council on this issue and after consultation with the local residents last summer, the council are exploring the feasibility of cyclist and pedestrian improvements.
- These improvements include zebra crossing and dropped kerbs.
- The council will be proposing and formally advertising this to the local public.
- This process will start soon.

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

None

## 5. Report from the SU Education Officer

Policy
Education Officer encouraged Academic Reps to vote on the policy ideas. There are 11 policies. Students can vote by logging into www.bathstudent.com/newpolicy. Students can also comment on policies. If students think a policy proposal is a good idea but needs a slight amendment then they can send an email to sucampaigns@bath.ac.uk. The voting closes on Sunday 21st February 2016.

University Teaching Awards
There are 6 awards that students can nominate members of teaching staff for. Nominations close at 5pm on Monday 7th March 2016.

Academic Rep Awards evening
This will take place on Thursday 14th April 2016. Location and time is yet to be confirmed but likely to be a similar format as previous years which will be an evening event to celebrate the work of Academic Reps.  Further information will be sent to Academic Reps once finalised.

Elections
The SU Officer election period is coming up soon. This year there is a new position which is the Postgraduate Officer role raising the number of SU Officers from five to six. Nominations close on Friday 19th February 2016 at 12.00pm. The Education officer encouraged all the Academic Reps to consider nominating themselves or engage with the campaigns. The Education Officer highlighted that even if students are graduating or going on placement next year it is important that students use their vote to have their say.

The Education Officer informed Academic Reps present that on the 1st March 2016 at 1.15 in 4W 1.2, the Questions to Candidates session will take place for the Education Officer candidates.  Any student is able to attend and use the opportunity to ask questions to the candidates. It is not mandatory for Academic Reps to attend however it would be strongly encouraged.

It was decided during this meeting of Taught Academic Council by those present that only the candidates for positions of Education Officer, President and Postgraduate Officerwill be permitted to post on the Academic Rep Facebook page and that posts will be restricted to one post each throughout the whole campaigns period.

National Students Survey
The Education Officer encouraged all those who are in their final year to take part in the National Student Survey (NSS) as this is their opportunity to have their say. She advised that students will receive reminder emails if they do not complete it therefore advised early completion.

Write Bites
This is a new initiative started by the Academic Skills Centre. This will take place every Wednesday throughout semester 2 from 1.15pm-2.05pm in the Writing Centre. Academic Reps were encouraged to try this and promote to their cohorts.  Leaflets on this initiative were available from the Education Officer.

6. **University Education strategy**

The current University Education Strategy which is in place is coming to an end this academic year. The University are currently developing a new strategy which will take us through from 2016-2019. It provides an overall framework for learning and teaching but also, covers elements of the wider student experience in particular what skills students gain and what extracurricular activities are available. Various workshops have been held regarding this with members of staff from across the University and Students' Union. The University would like students input into this, so they will be holding two workshops which will take place on Tuesday 16th March, session 1 will run from 12.15-13.05 and session 2 will run from 13.15-14.05. There are limited spaces for 30 Academic Reps per session and lunch will be provided. If Academic Reps are interested in attending they should send the Education Officer an email at sueducation@bath.ac.uk stating that they would like to attend the workshop and which session they would like to attend.

7. **2017/2018 Academic Year**

The SU President and Education Officer are members of a working group with members of staff from each Faculty and the School looking at the future shape of the academic year. One of the things currently being discussed is a review of the Academic Framework. Current discussions include relaxing the restrictions on the number of 12 credit combinations students can take in a year. The Education Officer asked for Academic Rep members thoughts on this. Responses from those present included:

- Assessment after each semester is better than having the whole assessment at the end of the year which was seen to put too much pressure on students.
- A move to more 12 credit units will work for some units but not all units
- An Academic Rep asked whether the exam results for 12 credit units would be released in the same period as for 6 credit units? The Education Officer replied that this would be the case.
- 3 credit units still feel like 6 credit units as they are assessed the same way by examination.
- Some lecturers still cover the same amount of material in a 3 credit unit as they would cover in a 6 credit unit.
- There needs to be more overlap within the units so that they feel like they are linked.

The other area which the University is working on is replacing the first semester revision week to a revision/assessment week. This is to try and reduce the bunching of exams. It is proposed that the earliest possible exam would take place on the Wednesday of the current revision week. The Education Officer asked the Academic Reps for their thoughts on this. The responses were:

- This is a good idea as it will help to reduce the bunching of the exams although it is just additional three days.
- Students had found it stressful last year to have four exams in a row.
- Academic Reps commented that flights are expensive for those who travel, and can be expensive to re-arrange if students have to combe back to University earlier.
- Academic Reps queried that this proposal would not guarantee that all students will get a spread out timetable.
- Academic Reps questioned how lecturers will fit in revision lectures in 2 days? The Education Officer answered this question and stated that they will try and make week 11 a revision week.
- Rather than changing revision week into revision/assessment week, an Academic Rep suggested using the weekends to hold exams.  The Education Officer commented on this and stated many students would not be happy with this option.
- Academic Reps commented that as there was no guarantee that exams would not still be bunched students would be giving up three days of revision and could still end up with a bunched exam timetable.
- Revision lectures in week 11 would result in teaching being cramped in order to finish the course material in ten weeks.
- Academic Reps suggested that instead the University could maybe try and decrease the number of exams.
- Academic Reps commented that having a longer exam period would help with issues caused by adverse weather conditions in January.
- The increase in new rooms and buildings being built on campus could help with exam timetabling by increasing the number of exam venues.
- A suggestion was put forward to begin the University year one week earlier or push inter semester week back one week.

Academic Reps were invited to send the Education Officer further feedback on this issue by email.

## 8. E-Learning & Technology Strategy

The Education Officer explained that the University is currently working on an E-Learning and Technology strategy. She then asked three questions which the Academic Reps gave their answers to. The questions and answers were:

1. **What does the university currently do well?**
   - An Academic Rep from Civil Engineering 1st year- the lecturer uses Moodle to upload material before lectures for students to do pre-study at home and then uses the lectures to answer questions students have and goes through past exam questions and worksheets
   - An Academic Rep from Computer Science 1st year- Students can use their smartphone to answer questions the lecturers ask through an app.
   - An Academic Rep from Economics- quizzes on Moodle test students understanding and gives instant marks but this is not a part of the assessment..
   - An Academic Rep from Biology 2nd year- the lecturer uses Moodle to post links to helpful websites, papers and animations.
   - An Academic Rep from PoLIS- online presentation with Voice Pres, recorded in advance and then debated in the seminar slot. This makes seminars more interesting or students.
   - An Academic Rep from IMML- unit convenor did a unit walkthrough as a video, which was really helpful. Lecturers are using clickers and poll tools whichincorporate interactive learning.
   - An Academic Rep from Psychology- lecturers use a multiple choice question app, where students can type in their answer.

2. **What would you like to see improved?**
   - Panopto should be compulsory- more value for money and better learning.
   - An Academic Rep from Biology 1st year- none of the lectures have been recorded. The Education Officer had stated that if students find that none of their lecturers are recording their lectures then it is best to raise it in the SSLC meeting.
   - The lecturers need training with how to use the technology (for example, anonymous marking and Panopto), the University should not assume that because they are academics they are experts with technology.
   - An Academic Rep from Maths- there should be some consistency within the departments as some use online notes but some don't and some use Panopto and some don't.
   - Moodle forums- these need to be used more by students and lecturers as many students still email. This is due to students not feeling comfortable with using Moodle forum.

- An Academic Rep from Computer Science- reports of lecturers using their personal websites, rather than Moodle. Lecturers aren't all behind Panopto.
- An Academic Rep from Sport and Exercise Science- using LINO, an anonymous version of Moodle.
- The lecturers need to make more awareness of Panopto to students as some lecturers say students don't use Panopto. This is because students are not aware of this. The Education Officer said she had statistics to support the fact that students were using Panopto.
- There was mixed feedback from Academic Reps as to whether hand-ins on Sunday evenings work for students.
- An Academic Rep from PoLIS- using Moodle for submissions, but the current system crashes and is not fit for purpose. The Education Officer reported that the University are aware of this, and that Moodle will be moving to an external server over the summer, which should improve things for students.
- An Academic Rep from Economics- perhaps not all lecturers are aware that they can mark work online the exact same way that they would on paper. Also raised that students have to submit two hard copies of their dissertation, one of which is not used by the University and returned to the student at the end. The Education Officer suggested to all Academic Reps that they should raise these concerns in their SSLC if this is the case.
- An Academic Rep from Management- in the first term, 50% of units are recorded via Panopto, and the other 50% are not. The Education Officer responded by saying that the University is currently on the second year of a three year roll-out plan.
- An Academic Rep from Psychology- various issues with the current use of technology, for example video but no audio.
- An Academic Rep from IMML- Is there a potential to do exams online? The Education Officer responded by saying that the Department of Biology and Biochemistry are already doing this.

3. **What are the current barriers?**
- An Academic Rep from Maths- staff are against it. Staff are set in their ways, and there needs to be a push for new technology.
- An Academic Rep from Engineering- some lecturers don't think students can learn from watching back the recordings.
- A belief that recording lectures has a direct link to student attendance , as students can watch the lecture at home. Could there be an access code to view the content?
- An Academic Rep reported that staff have concerns about how long Panopto takes to upload. The Education officer responded by stating that it is very quick.

9. **Implementing a Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (Peer Support Coordinator)**

*(Document circulated via email)* The Peer Support Coordinator introduced his role, he works with departments to run Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Schemes. PAL is a study support scheme which is run by students in the year above for students in the year below. PAL will follow the lecture programme of content. In a PAL session students will have 2 PAL leaders who are in the year above, and they will help students work through the course tutorial. They are there to enhance student learning. The Peer Support Coordinator and the team train the student volunteers who run the sessions, the PAL leaders have a 2 day training course at the start of September then they run the sessions. The PAL leaders meet the unit lecturers to discuss the course and get ideas from lecturers. The Peer Support Coordinator requested Academic Reps to promote the PAL scheme to their cohorts.

**10. Any Other Business**

None.

**11. Date, Time and Venue of next meeting: Friday 11th March 12.15 &13.15 Room 1W 2.101**