

Minutes

Meeting:	Academic Council (Taught)
Place:	CB 2.6
Date and Time:	Wednesday 21 st October 2015 12.15pm – 1:05pm & 1:15pm – 2:05pm

Present: *Lucy Woodcock* *Students' Union Education Officer*
Attendance register available as an appendix to minutes.

Apologies: Available as an appendix to minutes.

In Attendance: *Siobhan Silverstein, Academic Representation Coordinator*
Amy Young, 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

The SU Education Officer noted that the previous meeting included a question and answer session with the previous Education Officer. She therefore took out various items from this previous meeting to highlight the progress that had since been made. See key points in Report for the SU Education Officer.

4. Notice of Any Other Business

Reps were encouraged to share their experiences about daily life at University, especially related to the recent housing crisis and increasing student numbers. Efforts by SU President Jordon Kenny to address the housing crisis and how it affects students were mentioned as well as his interview on BBC Points West.

5. Report from the Students' Union Education Officer

The SU Education Officer introduced herself and congratulated Academic Reps on being elected. She welcomed the group and offered to have them drop by Level 3 of the Advice and Representation Centre at any point to talk to her about any questions they may have. The SU Education Officer then went on to address the key points brought up in the previous meeting and progress that has been made.

Key points:

1. Academic year shape: In semester 2 last year, the University proposed to change the current model from semesters to terms. Various polls and student feedback indicated that students were not satisfied with the proposed plans. Plans were placed on hold and the University is now looking for a better solution. The SU President and Education Officer are on a University working group and are ensuring student feedback is always considered. Updates to come soon. A proposal will go to Senate in December, so the SU Education officer asks that reps look for emails from her on the issue in case she needs to gather more thoughts/feedback.
2. Personalised timetables: MyTimetable was successfully launched in September. Feedback on the whole has been positive though there have been some minor problems. The SU Education officer encouraged reps to send an email to her at sueducation@bath.ac.uk if they or coursemates have had any problems and she will forward these onto the Timetabling Office.
3. Manvers Street: With the rise of students, it is increasingly difficult to find space on campus. The University has recently purchased the Police Station building on Manvers Street. There were discussions over the summer about plans for the building and the SU President and Sports Officer are involved in the development of building. The building will house professional and student facing services as well as a flexible learning environment off campus. The SU Education Officer will update when the building is available for use.
4. Space on campus: There is pressure on facilities and need for space. The SU Education Officer noted that she and the rest of the SU Officer team are working with the University to ensure that the infrastructure can meet students' needs.

5. Library computers: Issues had previously been raised regarding the condition of some library computers and access to Wi-Fi. Over the summer, provisions on 3 floors were refurbished and brand new computers put in place. If reps experience any problems, they are encouraged to let BUCS know. Wi-Fi signal throughout the library has been significantly improved as a result.
6. Panopto: The Academic Council session was recorded for first time, so reps can watch back and see what has been discussed. This will be especially helpful for reps on placement. This year there has been a significant increase in amount of teachers recording lectures and students accessing service across campus.
7. Online evaluations: At the end of the semester when a unit is finished, students are given a link to a survey asking their thoughts, but response rates are pretty low. Efforts are being made to improve response rates and lecturers need to better communicate the actions that are being taken so students can see their feedback is being used. All unit evaluations will now take place in weeks 10 and 11. Lecturers will be asked to fill in a template showing examples of feedback received and the actions that will be taken as a result.

6. Report from Academic Exec

The SU Education Officer explained that the Academic Exec is made up of Faculty Reps and Senate Reps. This is a standing item, but there is no report for this meeting as the group has only met the day before.

7. Unit and Programme Changes: An update from the SU Education Officer

The SU Education Officer explained there was an effort at University level to try and streamline the process that takes place when changes need to be made to units and programmes as the current process is very long and is an issue for staff. After outlining examples of each type of change (minor- title or content update to a unit; intermediate-permanent withdrawal of a unit/unit changing from one semester to another; major-withdrawal of programme/programme changing title), the SU Education Officer asked for responses concerning student consultation for unit/programme changes in a **Q&A session:**

Q: For what types of changes is student consultation needed?

A: Total name change of Childhood Education and Youth Studies programme to Education with Psychology. Students got an email about whether they wanted change; email was sent to whole degree from administrator. Rep emphasized that consultation for a name change is very important.

Q from floor: When is a name change really important?

A: The SU Education Officer answered it will depend on the change made – what is being taught in module and what is effected/impacted as a result of the change.

Q: Who thinks students should be consulted for minor, intermediate, major changes?

A: Half agreed for minor, all agreed for consultation on intermediate and major changes.

Q: How would you expect this student consultation to take place?

A: Rep talked about minor changes made, such as removing one interclass test, which was done entirely in DLTQC and only one rep will see, might be mentioned in SSLC. Major changes considered years in advance, minor made by staff. SU Education Officer asked: As department rep, did you get feedback from cohort about changes? **A:** Rep had discussed the change with peers and they didn't deem changes to be damaging for the course. Staff seemed fine with it and rep saw it as positive that consideration of change was relayed around.

A: If it's a simple change, an email should be sent out to all students for a vote or consultation. If it's a more complex change, reps should be notified so they can consult.

A: It depends on how big the change is. SSLC is fine if minor. If major and affects everyone in a big way with long lasting implications, i.e. degree outcome, then it needs to go to all students. Lots of minor changes together could impact degree.

A: Changes should be communicated to reps so they can collect views of students; all students should also have chance to give feedback if they want.

A: Consultation should come from Director of Studies to the students for all types of changes. Depending on the level of change, it's up to rep to discuss with students and then provide feedback to Director of Studies. Better if all students have chance to put opinion in.

A: If it's about streamlining process, 'no one cares' about minor changes. The SU Education Officer noted that the 'nobody cares' argument is subjective because some really do care.

A: It's always good to see if anyone has feedback and if they do care they have the opportunity to come forward with concerns.

A: An email should be sent out at end of semester that highlight changes, even if a minor change because it could impact someone, i.e. modules with specific names that employers want.

A: It is better to make everyone aware of the work done at SSLCs because most students are not really aware of things being discussed and changes being made. It is worth it for students to know the module can be changed/discussed.

A: Degree of consultation rises with degree of change. Rep deemed an email did not suffice for name change to entire programme.

SU Education Officer asked as follow-up: Was it made clear that students were unhappy with the process regarding the name change?

A: Students only got an email with options; there was no face-to-face discussion with the Head of Department. Whilst the process might take a little longer, it's necessary to have discussion with students.

A: Increase levels of consultation for increase in level of change. Most students in programme don't have time to worry about minor issues, better for reps to deal with and decide when to directly consult with others.

The SU Education Officer thanked all of the reps for their feedback. She would bring all these thoughts together, with those gathered from the Academic Exec and discuss further with University staff.

- 8. Students' Union Top Ten –** The Top Ten Issues for this year were presented and opportunities as to how reps can get involved were highlighted.

The SU Education Officer described that the Top Ten are the top 10 issues that the SU and its Officer Team are working on/planning for year ahead. Over the summer, approximately 75 potential issues were discussed before the final top ten were decided. The SU Education Officer then discussed each of the Ten:

1. Lobby to increase space to work in the library: The library is very busy, so working to maximize and make more efficient use of the current space is a priority. This could be in the form of rebalancing book vs study space or increasing e-book provision. Over the summer there had been a small extension to the level 2 space and student consultation was ongoing as to how best use this space.
 - a. *Bright Ideas for Level 2 of your Library:* Sheets are available in the library for students to write a list of bullet points of what they think should be included, or draw a diagram, any ideas for how level 2 should look. These are in library and should be handed in to the issue desk by **Monday 26th October**. The SU Education Officer encouraged reps to tell classmates to also contribute ideas. Thoughts, ideas, and creativity are needed to change the space to best fit student's needs. A Working group is also set up to find best use of the space.
2. Secure fixed fees for international students for the duration of their programme: When international students join, fees due for the duration of their programme are unknown and can go up for each year which the SU does not consider to be unfair. There will therefore be a campaign to try and secure fixed fees. A paper on the issue will be going to the University Finance committee soon.

3. Campaign to improve exam feedback: Every student should receive generic feedback on exams, which some departments do well, while others don't. There is a campaign to increase the opportunities to receive personalised feedback so students can make the most of learning opportunities here.
4. Ensure easy access to effective mental health support: All students should be seen within 5 days, but now there can be a waiting period of up to 20 days. Recently student services have increased the number of drop-in sessions available which is good. The SU will continue to work on improving access to support for those who need it.
5. Increase support for PG students who teach: Currently, there is one day training course provided for all PGs who teach. Whilst some departments offer good levels of developmental support afterwards, some are very much left alone. The SU is looking at how to improve current training offered and will also campaign for fair working hours, contracts, and pay.
6. Challenge costs on campus: The SU Education Officer encouraged reps to think about the costs on campus that should be challenged. Whilst some costs can't be reduced, the SU wants to work with students to ensure there is transparency and students know why they are paying certain costs.
7. Develop clear group work policies in each department: Some issues arise with group work, such as allocation of groups and marks and what to do if problems arise. Students need to know how to deal with these, who to speak to, and what procedure to follow should problems arise. A working group will be set up to cover these issues and establish some university-wide principles.
8. Improve prayer room facilities on campus: Facilities are sub-par, not clean, nor well looked after. The SU will work with the University to improve conditions.
9. Make sure unit evaluations are effectively addressed and actions communicated: According to the National Student Survey, 91 percent of students at Bath agree they have adequate opportunities to give feedback, but only 66 percent say that feedback is listened to, valued, and taken on board. The SU wants to increase the percentage of students who feel that their feedback is addressed.
10. Lobby for improved housing standards: In Bath some students are paying very high rent yet living in poor standards; this needs to improve. The SU is currently working with the University and local council to get an accreditation scheme and address these issues.

The SU Education Officer concluded the Top 10 report by noting that 5 are education based and 5 deal with the wider student experience. The SU Education Officer noted she is working on the education based ones and encouraged reps to email her if they are interested in working with her on a

particular issue. She also encouraged attendance to the Conference for reps to get more involved.

9. Student Learning Associates Project – An introduction was given to this paid opportunity to run a project within your department/faculty.

The SU Education Officer showed a video about the SLA project and noted that any student can run for this opportunity to enhance experience of learning and teaching at the university and gain skills for employment. More information and the video can be found at <http://www.bathstudent.com/education/sla/> Applications are now open and questions can be sent to StudentLearningAssociates@bath.ac.uk

Question from the floor: The open SSLC last year was funded through the SLA as the department did not provide incentives. Is the SLA really the best way to get this funded?

A: The SU Education Officer answered that funding for lunch varies from department to department and suggested the rep approach their department again. If it doesn't work, she said to then get in contact with the SU.

10. Training and Conference – Online training and information regarding conference sign up

The SU Education Officer explained that everyone should now have been added to Moodle in order to complete the online training. If a rep does not have access, please get in contact.

The Conference takes place on **Saturday, 31st October** in the Chancellors' building from 9:30-4:00. An email will be sent out when registration is open. The Conference includes faculty networking, campaign planning, broad range of workshops and sessions such as Higher Education in 2050, how to be effective in meetings, etc. The SU Education Officer noted it is a really great opportunity to gain skills and make the best of being a rep.

11. DISCUSSION: Themes for the Year Ahead – This was a chance for reps to discuss what they would like Academic Council to focus on this year

Before opening up the floor for discussion, the SU Education Officer noted that this first meeting had had lots of talking from her, but there will be more discussion in future meetings.

Q: What topics/themes should be discussed for academic year ahead?

A: Plugs in lecture rooms for students coming from town who need to charge laptops. **A:** SU Education Officer: Put through to Ideas to Action

- a. Ideas to Action: Forum to go on to write ideas for improvement.
Once a week issues are discussed at Officer Group, and someone in the SU will reply as to whether the idea is feasible or not.

A: Pedestrian crossing from South buildings to track

A: SU Education Officer: Please put through to Ideas to Action

A: Masters students to have peer mentoring as only available for research masters in her degree cohort and the taught students would benefit from the programme as well.

A: Forms/feedback for module in sciences as there is no feedback until exam

A: How the university prepares incoming students for what they are going to learn. For optional units, new students only found out in Freshers' week with one week to decide what they wanted. Rep encourages giving more time/preparation for choosing these modules.

A: SU Education Officer: Please put through to Ideas to Action

The SU Education Officer concluded the Q&A with a note to reps to send her an email with anything else reps would like to discuss at the next meeting.

12. Any Other Business – Please send notification prior to the meeting

academicreps@bath.ac.uk

13. Date, Time and Venue of next meeting: Faculty Forum – Tuesday 10th November; Room TBC; Academic Council Tuesday, 1 December 12:15 and 13:15 1W 2.101