

Student Council meeting 12th December

Welcome

Victoria, the chair of Student Council, welcomed everyone to scan their attendance and outlined the agenda for the meeting. They started with the Hot Topic and invited the Full-Time Officers to facilitate. The attendance didn't reach quoracy so no proposals could be voted on and the proposals would be brought to the next Student Council.

Hot Topic- Academic support- Personal tutors, peer tutors and dissertation supervisors

- It is a good system but more degree of consistency is key – very different in terms of how much they contact you.
- More options to change the Personal Tutor if required was suggested
- As an International Student I didn't know a lot about Personal Tutor but in first semester had a meeting in first Semester then I got to know what they can do for us. For International Students – everyone needs to know that they have a PT and that they can be really helpful for this.
- Our personal tutoring sessions were mostly used to deliver pre-written mini-lectures
- Also, for Modern Languages we have a meeting with our personal tutors once a month
- "I feel like with some supervisor, they don't really spend a lot of time with students on supervisor meeting and it can make it more difficult for students especially for those doing a dissertation for the first time. I believe it will be great if supervisor can give more support to students and allow supervisor time to be longer throughout the year."
- "My dissertation supervisor is very helpful and we've agreed that he'll email me every 2 weeks to make sure I'm still working on it"
- "One thing that was talked about in the group was that we've generally found our personal tutors and dissertation supervisors helpful overall. Also, maybe some more rigid or regularly scheduled meetings with dissertation supervisors"
- DL undergrad in Arch/Ancient history are all assigned personal tutors as standard
- "We have barely received any help for the upcoming third-year exams"
- "Dissertation supervisors and personal tutors were quite helpful"
- "In terms of exam support, in my course we have had workshops for how to approach essays and group presentations. It would be nice to see workshops for reflective statements which I know other courses get"
- "There could be more regular/scheduled contact like every week or every two weeks"
- "I think that personal tutors should be introduced for all distance learners. Not being campus-based makes the entire academic experience feel neglectful, and delivery of courses is subpar, especially considering that most DL postgrads pay the same as those who are campus-based"
- "I don't think the responsibility of contact should be placed on the student; it should be up to the PT to create a comfortable environment where the student is able to reach out. From my understanding it's the job of the PT to make sure their student is doing okay within their studies"
- "I also think that maintaining the relationship should be the responsibility of both staff and students. Where students are not so proactive, staff should reach out, even if it's just to check in and see how students are doing"

General Feedback

One student talked about a suggestion: "I wanted to draw all of your attention whoever studies or have lectures in Brookfield I have emailed student council about it but haven't received any response about a place to communicate rather than having just a cafeteria. I have proposed to certain tutors as it feels so much more serious around Brookfield campus. I have proposed about having a pool table at Brookfield."

Exam Destress and Refreshers

Jack gave an overview of the activities taking place during Exam Destress and Refresher Activities. Refresher's fair will be towards the end of January and Exam Destress will happen after exams finish and details will be promoted in due course.

Proposals

Part Time Officers who were bringing two of the proposals were unable to today, so the proposals about inclusive and accessible facilities and the promotion of inclusivity and support for students with accessibility needs will be sent to the next Council Meeting and will be voted on then.

Full Time Officer Structure

Jack explained the proposal: "The Governance Review of the Structures will only come into play for the 2025/26 for Officers, what I am suggesting a continuation of the Officer Team to continue this next year and redistribute responsibilities amongst the team. "

Jack talked through the Activities Officer Role and all of the key parts of it including societies, student groups, Attenborough Arts, Volunteering and Volunteering Hub, Fundraising, Sustainability, Careers and Employability. "Up until me no one has re-run for the role, we want more people to re-run for it, we haven't had any since 2008 since I was here."

Jack gave overview of the overlaps of the Full-Time Officer roles:

- between Activities and Sports roles: Awards, Committee Employability, Sports Groups, Societies Council, Freshers and Welcome, Committee training.
- between Activities and Wellbeing: Eco Anxiety, Food Bank Project, Reduced Inequalities, Belonging on Campus, Free Breakfasts, Health and Wellbeing.

The idea is to have:

- a Sports and Societies Officer – all student groups and sports clubs, sports at the University and Arts at the University.
- Community and Wellbeing Officer – effectively a full time Sustainability Officer, Health and Wellbeing, Fundraising, Volunteering, Employability and Sustainability.

The Students' Union is about to begin on Governance Review in January, including Trustee Board structure and effectiveness, Sabbatical Officer and representation structure and a review of Articles and By-Laws.

Questions/Feedback

- “So far, I think this (new Exec Officers structure) is a great idea, based on the description given of the existing Officer roles it seems like a much better divvying-up of the roles. I do have two concerns: 1) non-sports societies might get deprioritised because sports are typically more high-profile and need more resources and 2) with only 5 Officers it might be difficult to achieve everything you could have done with 6. Would you consider creating a totally new Officer position (maybe Inclusion Officer)?”

Jack responded to this with the following comments:

- Workload should be picked up by staff team, Officers should be there to act as representatives.
 - With the 6th role you could have project officers to achieve what
 - I don't think that non-sport societies would be deprioritised.
- Question – is something that should have been brought to Societies Council, Sports Council rather than coming straight here, in-effect going straight over their heads? It looks like it very much is top down rather than working in collaboration.
 - Other comment from attendant was if having one less officer helps with reducing workload, then why would officers scrap the role entirely and not focus on reforming the role.

Jack responded to this with the following comments:

- You will get consultation for major reviews; I don't think that the job description matters to go through the stages.
- Other Unions – do split it this way, when people apply for activities, they don't apply for Sustainability, if it is in Wellbeing often, they are also interested in Sustainability.

Joe added that “nothing is really changing in my role, I am going to be doing exactly the same, ultimately won't impact on them, Sports Department at University and they gave them input.”

Jade talked in support of the proposal we aren't removing anything from within the Officers responsibilities but just moving them between the different roles and splitting them fairly. “We thoroughly believe that this is the best way forward as a representative – ask that you trust us to go ahead with this.”

Jack suggested to Student Council to go away and try and think about the proposal and if there are any questions or feedback, they should let the officers know.

Policy Lapse

Victoria gave an overview of the process for renewing policies – this will ensure it will be kept as part of the Students' Union and will be voted on by Student Council. The deadline for emailing the Students' Union about the policies is the 22nd January.

Scrutiny Panel Reports

Victoria gave an overview of the Scrutiny Process – and the purpose of this and gave an overview of each Officer reports which are available through the Students' Union website.

Scrutiny Report for DL Officer

Victoria gave an overview of the DL Officer activities and of their activities they had completed within the roles. The DL Officer is looking to create a Distance Learning society and asked students who are interested to get in touch with Sheeba (the Distance Learning Officer) or Amelia from the Students' Union.

Exec Elections

Victoria outlined that these are great roles, encouraged everyone present to suggest an officer or refer a friend. The forms to express your interest and refer a friend are on the Elections section of the Students' Union website.

Close

Victoria thanked everyone for their contribution to Student Council and mentioned that Student Council will return in January.

Minutes compiled by Ian Bruce and Amelia Jones on 13th December 2023.