

STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

NOTES of the FOURTH meeting of the STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

in the 2020-21 academic session held on Thursday 18th March 2021, at 2pm and via Teams

Present:

Martin Snowden PVC FES (Chair)

Colin Allen, DSE BUS
Christopher Bustin, HIR
Karen Brough, AD SAS-Registry
Mark Crittenden HoSC
Bilal Ijaz, Pres GSU
Simon Leggatt, DSE FEH
Niel U Lewis, GSU Officer
Simon Lewis, DSP & BI
Mike McGibbon, DSE FES
Sara Ragab, AD SAS-Student Services
Stephanie Robinson, ICO
John Schless, CEO GSU
Chris Shelley, DSAS
Tania Struetzel, GLT
David Watson, DSE FLAS

In Attendance:

Simon Earp, for DoE&F
Richard Mendez, Head ECS
David Puplett, for DILS
Donovan Synmoie, GLT

Norma Powell, (Secretary) SAS

Apologies:

Paul Butler, DILS
Heidi King, DoC&R
Chris Forster DoE & F

SEC20.24 i) The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 5 February 2021, via Teams, were **approved**.

ii) **Actions Arising**

- *SEC20.14 Actions arising.*

Following discussion with the Vice-Chancellor, it was agreed that the BAME Attainment Gap project be added to future SEC agendas as a standing item.

Completed. Agenda item 2 refers.

Katarina Thompson to arrange for the updated University Survey Policy to be added to the University web site.

Completed.

Chair agreed that representations would be made to central finance to request that a budget would be made available in order to run the International Student Barometer survey in 2022.

Action: In progress.

- *SEC 20.16 GSU (including Medway) term 1 membership data and looking ahead*

CEO GSU to present formal report on the retention project to the next meeting of SEC.

Completed. Agenda item 8 refers.

- *SEC 20.17 Update on programme committee meetings.*

NL/TS/DSEs to meet to discuss setting up a formalised process for these meetings/process to deal with issues and report back to the next meeting.

In Progress. Meeting arranged for 12 March 2021.

- *SEC 20.18 Student Engagement Team*

Student Engagement to be included as standing item on future agendas.

Completed. Agenda item 3 refers.

- *SEC 20.19 Digital Champions.*

S.Perera to advise Chair/Committee what is required to move the project forward and Chair agreed to raise at VC level.

Ongoing. SP Picked up with ILS. Funding request being prepared to extend pilot to end current financial year. Will arrange meeting with MS.

- *SEC 20.20 Update from Assistant Director SAS Registry.*

The Chair expressed concern about where, as an institution, we are going with ECs and asked to meet with AD SAS-Registry to discuss. He invited others with an interest to join the discussion.

Ongoing. AD SAS, Student Registry reported that the University had been seeing an exponential growth in Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) even before the Covid_19 pandemic. Meetings of the EC Framework group have taken place and will continue. It is hoped that this will be recognised as a project. Termly meeting set up with Faculty Officers to try & identify reasons.

- *SEC 20.21 Update from Assistant Director SAS, Student Services*

AD SAS-Student Services to provide details of funds provided for students living in rental accommodation to N. Lewis (GSU).

Completed. 2nd March: email sent to N Lewis:
The Student Fees & Funding Team have been working hard on this and thus far have awarded 170 bursaries.

- SEC 20.22 AOB – *Streamlining student communications.*

DSEs to set up working group to look at streamlining student communications, and report back to SEC.

Completed. Meeting has taken place and route set up to refer communications back through established channels.

SEC20.25 BAME ATTAINMENT GAP PROJECT

Donovan Synmoie was in attendance at the meeting to provide the group with an update on the progress of the BAME Attainment Gap Project. He reported that actions and proposals have been refined and workstreams identified:

The initial work by Kingston University has given the team a solid platform to work from.

The Chair proposed an open invitation to DS to come along and update SEC as and when he deemed appropriate.

DS was advised to contact NP should he wish to attend and update any future SEC meetings.

SEC20.26 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TEAM – UPDATE

HoSC updated the group on progress in setting up the new Student Engagement team.

Appointments have been made and staff should be in post by mid-April. Meanwhile informal meetings are taking place and recruitment to the admin and clerical support roles is in progress.

SEC20.27 GSU PRESIDENT'S REPORT – MARCH 2021

The President provided a report on the work of GSU to SEC.

Officers' work – Officers have worked on numerous projects including Mayo's involvement with the 3 minute thesis heats, personal tutor review and faith societies. Niel has worked on the 'This girl can' campaign, taken part in the national discussion on value for money as well as major disruption procedures and complaints. Zoe has worked with students on the 'Pee without prejudice' campaign, LGBTQ+ issues and working to make student records more inclusive. Bilal has had success with the Global Week and winter celebration campaigns and has been involved with University Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Elections – These were carried out online this year due to Covid_19 and went very well. As a result of the election the 2021/22 officer team will be made up of:

President - Aatika Ayoub – currently studying BA History and Politics
Yasinur Rashid Jabed – currently studying BA International Business
Zoe Campbell (re-elected for second term) – studied BA Criminology
Nele Leitolf – currently studying BA English Literature and Creative Writing

The Chair congratulated the successful candidates on behalf of the committee and looked forward to them being introduced to members.

Teaching in a blended world – bookable personal tutoring and office hours.

At the Student Assembly, students had requested a booking system for personal tutoring & office hours online. This would keep inboxes clearer by having these meetings booked on a separate system and students would be better able to access their lecturers/personal tutors.

SEC was asked to approve the following actions:

- Agree a clear system of booking and this to be published ahead of term 3.
- Include information in programme handbooks and welcome information.

SEC **approved** the actions as above.

SEC 20.28 UNIVERSITY ON-CAMPUS DELIVERY

The GSU presented a paper outlining the results of surveys undertaken with students on their views and experience of the university's blended learning approach. The Vice-Chancellor takes the delivery very seriously and on-campus sessions were made available wherever possible. Some students had expressed dissatisfaction with the offer.

The DSEs disputed some of the evidence from the surveys and were able to show that on-campus sessions were available in cases where students had said it was not. It was agreed that some lectures may have been cancelled and that there could have been some element of communications breakdown. For example, although students are advised at registration to check their gre.ac.uk emails, only 20% of student use this.

The Chair asked that the DSEs be given a right of reply to the paper as some of the information was factually incorrect and asked the GSU representatives not to circulate the paper until the DSEs' responses were received when the best way forward would be decided.

Action DSEs to provide response to the paper to GSU/SEC.

SEC 20.29 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT

The President GSU presented a report to the committee outlining the case to increase the support provided to international students at the University with the aim of improving their experience at the University from application through to graduation and beyond. The increase in support should reflect the increase in the number of international students at the University over the last five years as well as the expected future increase in numbers attracted by the new UK immigration visa system.

The recommendation is to establish a new Greenwich Global Centre based on comments from the 2019 International Student Barometer survey. The centre will work with various stakeholders across the university and will have a team of 4 people offering advice and activities as well as academic, employment and retention support and will include a manager providing advice to GSU and the University on non-academic matters affecting the students.

The paper includes a breakdown of funding required to set up and run the centre and suggestions as to how the funding will be provided.

The Chair asked that they continue to work with Student & Academic Services and in consultation with Director SAS to take this forward. He recognised that they had identified a number of issues and that VCG could be approached re finance resources once all the work has been completed. He asked that relevant extracts from the minutes be considered in relation to the paper.

Progress to be reviewed at a future meeting of SEC.

Action:

SEC 20.30 FACULTY INTERNATIONAL STUDENT BAROMETER (ISB) ACTION PLANS

DSEs had provided action plans following the results of the 2019 ISB survey. The Chair suggested DSEs highlight any specific actions or issues and/or anything that might usefully feed into the report on international student support.

DSE FEH – The Faculty is aware that there are particular issues relating to one programme and that low participation is focussed here.

Due to the small number of international students at Avery Hill there is no Welcome Week provision, meaning students are unlikely to travel to Gre for Welcome, hence negative response to questions relating to this question.

Accommodation – only 19 of the 59 students on the programme are living on campus – again, this leads to low participation.

The faculty is to look at this particular programme and see what students would like on that programme.

DSE BUS – The ISB covers some of the same issues as the NSS therefore no separate plan is needed. (teaching & learning).

The Faculty has large numbers of Tier 4 students and a lot arrive extremely late and miss the Welcome Week. This hasn't happened this year due to online learning and this may filter into the responses to the next ISB.

There is a need to look at how to deal with late arriving students and deadlines, especially for registration. Hard deadlines may solve early term problems which are reflected in the ISB?

Action

The Chair to set up a group to discuss deadlines as this is an issue for all faculties and the University.

DSE - FLAS – Many factors outside direct control of faculties and require a University wide response.

As in other Faculties issues often overlap with those in the NSS and are therefore ongoing.

Employability – poor results for international students although the Faculty puts a lot of resource in. Could be a communication problem and it could be made clearer that the provision of resource/support are equally applicable to international students.

DSE FES – As in other Faculties there were similar results in the NSS.

There are concerns that students are not acting as 'positive agents' for the University despite the provision of social activities and subject based societies etc.

The web site is poorly rated. The Faculty needs to work with Marketing and Communications to try to find the reasons for this.

40%+ of international students acknowledge that they arrived after welcome week.

Online resources help but not good.

Work and teaching opportunities are limited.

Accommodation – cost & quality. (The Chair confirmed that capital funds are in place to improve accommodation).

English language training and provision is growing.

There is limited access to support from counselling services.

DSAS advised the committee that some of this work will be picked up by the Welcome planning programme.

The Chair recognised that there is a lot of work to be done over next 12 months and suggested he should meet with concerned partners to discuss.

Action Chair/HIR/DSAS/Pres GSU to meet – NP to organise.

SEC 20.31 GSU RETENTION PROJECT

The project has continued into term 2 and will then move over to SAS. Outcomes have been met and retention rates have been stable and good during a challenging period. Key audience needing help has been disabled students. As a result of the project there is a large data set now residing with PAS which will be useful in many areas of the University.

AD SAS-Registry recognised the good achievements of the project and supported the recommendations in the report. She thought that results could be tied into the Interruptions and Withdrawals project looking at how to reduce the huge number (1500) and how to bring students back following interruption of studies.

Action Chair asked AD SAS-Registry to provide any relevant information on Interruption and Withdrawal and he will raise at VCG.

SEC 20.32 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

DSE FES said that Faculties need very clear guidance very soon, in order to make decisions about Welcome Week in relation to Covid_19.

Action Chair asked DSEs to provide relevant information and he will raise at VCG.

SEC 20.33 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Minutes of Faculty Student Experience Committees:

- FEHHS, 20 February 2021
- FES, 3 March 2021
- FLAS, 7 October 2020

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 22nd April 2021, 2.00 pm (via Teams)