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**Student Experience Committee**

**SEC10-M1**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held 24 February 2010**

**Members:** Professor Morag Bell (Chair), Professor Chris Backhouse (ab), Ms Hannah Beasley, Mr Malcolm Brown (ab), Mr Chris Earle (ab), Professor John Feather (ab), Mr Rod Hulme, Dr Jennifer Nutkins, Mr Chris Peel, Dr Phil Richards (ab), Mr Will Spinks (ab), Mr Nigel Thomas

**In attendance:** Marie Kennedy (Secretary)

**Also in attendance**: Mrs Ellie Roberts (in place of Malcolm Brown)

**Apologies:** Chris Backhouse, Malcolm Brown, Chris Earle, John Feather, Phil Richards, Will Spinks

**10/1. Minutes**

SEC09-M3

The minutes of the meeting held 18 November 2009 were approved.

**10/2. Matters arising from the minutes**

**.1 2012 graduation ceremonies**

The Chief Operating Officer had requested the Student Experience Team to research the costs of a possible July ceremony for international students, and Registry staff were currently investigating this.

*Secretary’s note: Registry report will be considered by the Team at its next meeting.*

**.2 Staff agency at Loughborough**

A small group including representatives of the Students’ Union, Finance and Human Resources had met over the last year to consider the possible establishment of an internal staff agency. The group had concluded that the proposal was not financially viable, and it would shortly recommend to Operations Committee that the Director of Human Resources and the Purchasing Manager be authorised to invite local agencies to tender for a contract to provide a service to the University on preferential terms in exchange for a guaranteed volume of business for clerical and administrative posts. . It was not certain that there would be space in the Union Building if an agency wanted to establish a branch on campus.

**.3 Space for recreational sport**

Operations Committee had given permission for a feasibility study of three multi-use games areas (MUGAs), one of which would be used part of the time by the Sports Technology Institute for research, thereby reducing its cost. A number of possible sites across campus had also been suggested for casual ‘knockabout’ use and the Students’ Union was currently canvassing student views in order to prioritise these. Suitable sites would be included in the SDC plan and Facilities Management’s estates strategy. The Student Experience Team would further consider the matter and report to the Committee in June.

**ACTION: NRT & Secretary**

**10/3. Arrivals and induction (SEC10-P1(a) - (d)** *papers (c) and (d) tabled***)**

The Induction Working Group had provided the information requested by the Committee at its last meeting: to break down the matrix of information provided throughout the student career by student group, and to identify the priorities for information to be provided to students during induction.

The Group had made five recommendations, the first of which was an induction website, for which the Quality Enhancement Officer for the SSH Faculty had provided a mock-up *(tabled)*. The Committee acknowledged that while the Academic Registry appeared to the logical ‘owner’ of such a page, there were issues about the new CMS, links to the existing Current Students homepage, avoiding any unnecessary overlap with existing information and ensuring information from departments and support services was complete and up-to-date, as well as resourcing implications during what was already a very busy period for Registry staff.

The Induction Working Group had also prepared a checklist of information for undergraduate induction *(tabled)*, intended for use by departments. To avoid ‘information overload’ the Group had carefully considered the information that freshers most needed in their first few days. It would be at departments’ discretion whether to invite representatives from (eg) IT Services, Library, Student Services and the Students’ Union to the Week 0 Friday induction events, and whether and when to provide any further briefing. The Committee welcomed the way some departments now organised a more active ‘treasure hunt’ induction, where freshers were given tasks such as finding their way to a lecture theatre across campus and finding information in the Library.

The Group had some concerns that not all postgraduates received a departmental induction comparable to those for UGs: some departments invited PGTs to attend on the Friday before term began but did not organise a programme of events for them. However, it was recognised that many PGTs and PGRs were international students who were unable to arrive in time for a Friday induction.

The Committee welcomed the Union’s suggestion that Departmental Chairs should speak to their HoDs and departmental administrators about possible involvement in the 2010 inductions, and the information that the Union’s Postgraduate Officer had been very proactive in this respect during the current academic year.

**AGREED**

1. That the webpage be approved in principle, but that it was crucial that departments (especially) and support services took ownership of their own sections and committed to providing timely, up-to-date, complete and accurate information.
2. That further consultation about the webpage be conducted with groups such as DALG and HoDs & HoSs, and that Students’ Union representatives would attend the former to emphasise the importance of students receiving complete, up-to-date information..

**ACTION: Secretary**

1. That the Academic Registrar would consult colleagues on ‘ownership’ of the webpage.

**ACTION: JCN**

1. That the webpage would be better organised in a hierarchy of student groups, eg Foundation, UG, PGT and PGR, further broken down by international students, returners, etc.
2. That the Programme Quality Team be asked to reconsider these issues as soon as possible, and, in view of the importance of inductions for PGs, especially PGTs, be asked to invite the Director of the Graduate School and both the current and future Postgraduate Officers to that meeting.
3. That the Student Experience Team should give further consideration to the issues of arrivals and induction and report to the next Committee meeting.

**ACTION: Secretary**

*Secretary’s note: following the meeting, the Chairs of the Committee and the Team agreed to take a forthcoming opportunity also to consult Departmental Learning and Teaching Co-ordinators.*

**ACTION: MB**

 The Working Group was thanked for all its work on these important issues.

**10/4. Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

 Noted that:

1. The University would take part in the 2010 PTES, organised by the Higher Education Academy (HEA);
2. The survey will commence at Loughborough on 16 April (the latest possible date) and run for three weeks;
3. Results would be benchmarked against other participating HEIs and against the 1994 Group;
4. The HEA would in future run the PTES and the PRES in alternate years.

**10/5. Student Barometer surveys**

Although representations had been made about the usefulness of previous results, and the way these were benchmarked against other HEIs, and members of the 1994 Group, the low response rates to date had influenced Operations Committee’s refusal to sanction future participation. Some members of the Student Experience Team were disappointed with this decision and its Chair had been asked to obtain a further academic view about the validity of results. Other members felt resources might be better used to investigate alternatives, such as adding questions about support services to the Students’ Union’s Annual Survey.

The Union had some concerns that additional questions might risk diluting its own response rate, but was willing to consider the proposal, including:

1. the possibility of evolving questions that would help both Union and University;
2. the possibility of adding such questions in alternate years;
3. the possibility of using a bounce-back where only students who had indicated their willingness to do so would be asked the supplementary questions would be asked ;
4. the possibility of the University contributing to the cost of the Survey.

**ACTION: NRT/ RH**

The Committee further noted that 24 universities belonging to CUBO, of which imago was a member, had used i-grad’s bounce-back facility following an earlier Barometer survey, to obtain further information about accommodation and catering services. The consensus of opinion among these 24 HEIs had been that the i-grad service was very expensive, and CUBO would in future only use it infrequently.

The Committee would not at present pursue the issue of possible future participation in the Barometer surveys but would keep a watching brief.

**10/6. Summary of annual reports from student services (SEC10-P2)**

The Director of Student Services would in future compile a summary of annual reports for the Committee to consider, while the Student Experience Team would consider the individual reports in more detail. This summary had also been circulated to HoDs, HoSs and the Students’ Union.

The Committee was pleased to note that although the current economic climate meant that fewer employers would attend the forthcoming Careers Fair, the drop was much less than in some other universities.

The Committee was also pleased that a number of students who were active in the Union had expressed interest in registering for the Employability Award, and that there was interest from other students who realised the importance of improving their key skills in order to enhance their employment prospects. The Committee welcomed information that the Community Action Chair was promoting the Award among student volunteers. Union representatives noted that a variety of Union and Hall committees provided ways in which students could gain useful experience. Union data showed that some 2/3 of students were involved in at least two such activities, and some students in more. Manifestos for the current Union elections also indicated that there were a number of routes by which students gained relevant experience that should help their employability. The University would track students to see whether this achieving the Award enhanced their future careers.

Union representatives were consulted about the best ways alumni could support current students. They considered that most alumni probably identified most strongly with their halls of residence, although some would identify more with their departments or their sporting interests.

The Student Services were concerned at the number of students at risk because of significant mental health problems and the way their numbers had increased this year. Some were international PGs who were especially vulnerable during vacations when some support services operated at a reduced level. In addition, not all students allowed sharing of information between the services that would enable the University better to support them. The Committee noted that the University and the Union provided special events for students who remained in Loughborough over Christmas and Easter vacations, and that the Union’s ‘Universal Thursday’ continued throughout the year. Inevitably, however, Union activities including those with Community Action were reduced.

The Committee also noted that the new UKBA visa regulations had placed the University in a difficult position when students whose visas had or were due to expire but were unable to attend University because of ill-health. The University was allowed to continue to sponsor for up to 60 days but illness might force students to take up to a year off. Although it seemed inappropriate, the regulations obliged the University to report these students to the UKBA as not attending. The University was currently reviewing its Leave of Absence procedures to see if they might be improved in these and other situations.

The Head of the Student Advice and Support Service was also concerned that the new UKBA limitations that prevented students attending short courses from bringing dependents with them might affect both attendance on pre-sessional courses, and recruitment from some countries. The regulations would also increase costs: students would probably need to obtain two consecutive visas, and the University would incur administrative costs.

 **AGREED:**

1. That it would be useful if in future the report identified key issues on which the Committee should focus.

**ACTION: NRT**

1. That the Union would provide information on the way students were involved in activities that should improve their employability.

**ACTION: CP**

 **10/7. Proposed amendment to Ordinance XXXIII, Traffic and Parking in the**

 **University (SEC10-P3)**

 Noted.

**10/8. Student Experience Team notes of the last two meetings (SEC10-P4)**

 Noted.

**10/8. Residential Provision and Management Sub-Committee notes of the last**

**meeting (SEC10-P5)**

 Noted.

**10/9. Financial Hardship Sub-Committee reports (SEC10-P (a) & (b))**

 Noted.

**10/10. Any other business: Implementation Plan**

The Plan would shortly need to be updated and considered by the Student Experience Team before submission to the Committee for its approval.

**10/11. Date of the next meeting**

Wednesday 16 June 2010 at 3.30 pm in Committee Room 2

*(please note the later start-time)*

Author – Marie Kennedy

Date – February 2010

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