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**SENATE**

**Subject: Programme Presidents - Proposal from the Students’ Union**

**Origin: Learning and Teaching Committee, 29 September 2011**

**Senate action required:** Senate is asked to approve a proposal from the Students’ Union to create Departmental Programme Presidents. The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) discussion is summarised below, with the proposal from the Students’ Union appended.

**Introduction**

At its meeting on 29 September 2011 LTC endorsed a proposal from the Students’ Union to create 20 School/Departmental Programme Presidents who would be expected to act as links between existing programme reps and the Students’ Union and University (paper appended).

LTC noted it was desirable for the Programme Presidents to be the student reps on School LTCs. However, for 2011/12 this would not always be possible as the Presidents had still to be elected. For future sessions this would not be an issue as it was envisaged Presidents would be elected at the end of the previous academic session.

There was concern that the workload for Presidents would vary significantly between Schools and that some students may be excluded from the system, for example: postgraduates; students on placements; students studying off campus. The Students’ Union was asked to keep the system under review, evaluating it after the first year of operation.

At its meeting on 27 October 2011 LTC encouraged Schools to discuss the Programme President proposal at their next Student Staff Liaison Committee, noting that the proposal was subject to formal approval at Senate on 16 November. LTC advised that while it supported the proposal, it was important to ensure that arrangements in Schools that worked effectively should not be compromised by the Programme President system.

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Programme Presidents Proposal

Contacts: Jayde Savage, VP Education

*Create a position senior to Programme Reps to lead, motivate and create stronger links with the University.*

**Where we are now**

At present we have 454 Programme Reps who often feel unengaged in their role. It has been noted on numerous occasions that Programme Reps feel unrecognised and overlooked both by the Students Union and the University, with there interactions limited to SSLC’s and conferences, attendance levels for both is usually poor.

It is an unwelcome, yet common experience for Programme Reps to report that they do not feel their SSLC’s function in a manner to allow them to help solve issues.

In addition to this there is often confusion between Department Chairs and Programme Reps as students do not know who they need to speak to regarding any academic issues. Some Department Chairs are also confused about their role and believe that they are responsible for academic issues. This lack of clarity has left us with a system that is not functioning correctly at many levels.

**Where we want to be**

Ideally we would create a system where Programme Reps feel engaged, empowered and true partners is shaping the academic experience. We want the Programme Rep system at Loughborough to be regarded by our own students and others throughout the sector as a true example of a partnership that can solve real issues and enhance the overall experience. In order to allow us to achieve this the University and Students Union need to work together to help both involve and support all those involved in academic representation at Loughborough. To do this we believe a new position has to be created, this would be the position of Programme President. There would be 20 Programme Presidents who would represent the different Schools/Departments. The President position would be senior to the Programme Reps and would help to bridge the gap between student’s voices and ideas and University actions.

**Main job requirements for the Programme Presidents**

* The Presidents would meet with the Programme Reps in their department termly, a month before SSLC’s.
* In addition to this they would also meet with a member of the University staff which they would ‘buddy’ up with. This would be the ADT of the School. In some cases the ADT would have a meeting with 5 Programme Presidents, for example in the School of Science, however in Wolfson the meeting would be one to one.
* There would be 6 meetings a year with the ADTs, these would take place prior to and after SSLC’s.

Programme Presidents would meet with the VP Education every other week

In order to make this new position effective is has been necessary to chose to have 20 Programme Presidents rather than 10 within the new school system; this is because in some Schools the Presidents would have too many Programme Reps to lead. We felt that smaller groups would be more effective, would create a team atmosphere, would result in higher attendance to events and overall be a much more effective model.

Existing School Department Committees would be kept separate They would deal only with the social side of a student’s course. Programme Reps and Presidents would be responsible for academic representation within their School / Department.

**Election process**

The election process would take place during the first week in December after the Programme Reps have been elected and trained. Programme Reps would elect their Presidents via an online voting system. This system would be set up and administered by the Students Union.

**Student Union support**

The Union is extremely keen to ensure that the Programme Rep system is a success. We have created a campaign titled ‘Your Education’ which at present focuses around improving academic representation and encouraging students to engage more with their studies. In addition to this we are providing programme specific training and on-going support throughout the year.

**Future Ideas**

* Ideally Programme Presidents would be elected at the end of the academic year, around May. This would ensure that the Presidents can receive training before they leave for Summer and then help out with things such as training and the election process with the incoming Programme Reps.
* The idea is to move Department Committees away from academic representation and more towards representing the course socially and which would therefore make the Programme Reps and Presidents the point of call regarding academic issues and ideas.