

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON STUDENT SENATE

Report to Council from its meeting on 27 April 2022

Committee Chair: Professor Jean-Noël Ezingard

The 36th meeting of the University Student Senate was held on Wednesday 27 April 2022. Attendees joined via MS Teams.

Welcomes, introductions and apologies

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed everyone to the final Student Senate meeting of the 2021-22 academic year and apologised for the last-minute switch to an online meeting due to the booked room being occupied. Apologies were noted.

Report from the last meeting

The report from the last meeting was presented to Student Senate. It was agreed that the current Terms of Reference would be carried over to 2022-23.

Updates from members

The Vice-Chancellor gave an update at the start of the meeting on the activity that had taken place in 2021-22 to date. This included the following:

- In 2021-22 the University successfully supported students to return to study safely on-campus and have now begun to phase out the remaining COVID-19 measures and move to a response phase, where support is provided on an ad-hoc basis.
- That recruitment for the January and April intakes had been very strong in some areas such as Business, Computing, Nursing, and Life and Health Sciences, with more than 800 students joining programmes in the Faculty of Business and Law in April. A large number of student ambassadors had supported the University in welcoming the mainly overseas students.
- The National Student Survey will close next week and at the time of writing over 65% of eligible students at Roehampton had participated. The results will be published in summer 2022. The UK Engagement Survey for all students will also open on 3 May.

Student Senate Funding Proposals

The RSU President gave an overview of the five key projects to be considered for endorsement by Student Senate as detailed in Paper RSS36/02. Each project, summarised briefly below, was discussed in turn.

a. Sanitary products for campus users: in 2020-21 the RSU launched a period poverty campaign funded by the RSU that was supported further in 2021 by the Vice-Chancellor. Since its launch, approximately 5,000 individual products have been distributed across all four colleges. The proposal is to scale-up the project by entering a subscription with Grace and Green, which would enable a regular distribution and disposal of free sanitary products to students.

b. Niteline: based in London, Nightline is supported by student volunteers and provides free and confidential listening and out-of-hours support through a helpline. A Nightline affiliation would give Roehampton students access to peer-to-peer listening, support and an information service that complements the University's wellbeing services.

Student Senate noted that if the affiliation went ahead, research would be imperative to ensure that the service catered effectively for the increased influx of international students and their diverse backgrounds. It was therefore agreed that interim feedback should be presented at the next meeting in November, to consider additional support for any initiatives around international students before the next academic year.

c. Improvement to key social spaces: since the COVID-19 pandemic, what students need from their campus spaces has shifted towards multi-use areas. The proposal aligns with ongoing work to potentially develop the Digby Square and Froebel Courtyard, and the Union Bar, to encourage greater numbers of students to visit these locations when not in teaching.

d. Extension of the bystander intervention scheme to support gender equality and liberation work: at present the scheme has 12 Bystander Intervention Leads who are deployed at RSU events to provide support for students who may have been affected by sexual harassment/assault by working closely with the security and medical teams. The proposal aims to raise student safety on campus, provide bystander training, and to help student leaders coordinate gender equality and liberation initiatives.

e. Equity of Experience Research Intern: the University needs to address the diverse needs of a rapidly growing international student population across the student lifecycle. An intern would provide the research capacity and their findings may help steer future planning discussions around induction and arrival, support and intervention, payment structures, and space usage on campus.

Student Senate discussed funding, and noted in particular for 2 b and d, that the funding was for this year only. Student Senate agreed to take the proposals forward as **approved**. The RSU President and RSU staff were thanked for the detailed proposals and for developing the projects.

Updates from Student Senators

Student Senate was thanked for its role in raising issues on behalf of the student body that the University was then able to address and resolve. Student Senators then raised a number of items to be discussed:

- Additional prayer space in the library: Student Senate discussed expanding prayer space provision during Ramadan. It was noted that there were alternative prayer spaces in the Sir David Bell Building and the Queens Building in Southlands. It was agreed that the matter would be followed up with the University's Muslim Chaplain. **Action TR**
- Sir David Bell Building: Student Senate discussed the issues around booking rooms and hiring audio visual equipment. Students were advised to follow the

issue up with the School of Arts' Dean or Deputy Dean in the first instance, and that a number of specialist and general spaces were available across the campus. For equipment, dedicated resources are available in the SDDB and Open Access online adobe for students. **Action TR**

- Academic Guidance Tutors (AGT): Student Senate discussed academic workloads in the School of Arts. It was advised that a new academic workload model had been developed and was currently with the UCU. The Dean of Students was also reviewing what the expectations and responsibilities were for AGTs and a paper would be presented at the upcoming Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.
- New Computer Science Course: ensuring retention on the course was discussed and it was agreed that the Deputy Dean (Computer Science) would meet with the students to address any concerns they may have. Computer Science is a new subject area and Roehampton has well-developed processes to support students to progress on their courses. **Action SD**
- Student Medical Centre: It was clarified that the centre was integrated with Putney Mead and that students also had access to the larger practice. As it was suggested that some students were unsure how to use the booking system, it was noted that further information would be circulated. **Action AA-C**
- Other issues discussed by Student Senate were:
 - Trainee teachers' placements being impacted by COVID-19 and classes closing at short notice.
 - The Mitigating Circumstance procedure.
 - Summaries of Adjustments for student with disabilities.
 - The campus environment.

The management team agreed to follow up the issues with the respective Student Senators after the meeting. **Action JK**

Introduction from the new Sabbatical Officers

The RSU President introduced the new team for 2022-23. This year there had been an increase in participation for both candidates and student voters. A total of 76 students stood for a position and voter turnout was just over 24%, double last year's total.

The sabbatical officers-elect starting their one-year term on 1 July 2022 are:

- Harrison Cohen, elected RSU President
- Mushtaq Ismail, re-elected Vice-President (Education)
- Sharon Azams, elected Vice-President (Community and Welfare)

The incoming RSU President outlined their aims for the coming year, including reintroducing Froebel traditions in the wake of COVID-19 and campus lock-downs, and focussing on international students.

The Vice-Chancellor congratulated the incoming President on their successful election and thanked the outgoing Sabbatical Officers for doing a tremendous job in challenging circumstances.

Other items

Student Senate received an update from the Dean of Students on the recent Mature Student evening event, held in response to research on finding out about the mature student experience. 186 students signed up, 100 attended and there was very positive feedback on the event. An International Student event is planned in the near future.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked all members of Student Senate for their contributions and wished everyone all the best for their upcoming assignments.

Date of next meeting: 23 November 2022

*Elaine Lentell
Governance and Legal Office
April 2022*