

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

SENATE

STUDENT SENATE

Summary Report on business considered at the eighth Meeting of the University Student Senate, held on Wednesday 20 February 2013

1. Composition and membership of Student Senate (Paper RSS08/1)

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chair and those present welcomed Professor Michael Day, Director of the School of Education, and Jonathan Carter (representing RSU student interns) as new members of Student Senate. It was noted that Wade Tomlinson, President of the Roehampton Students' Union, could not be present due to another commitment of training for a national project.

Members of the Department of Communications were also welcomed as attendees at this meeting, in relation in particular to an item on communications with students and alumni (*see Note 5, below*).

2. Notes from the last meeting (Paper RSS08/2)

The meeting received and confirmed the notes from the last meeting, held on 14 November 2012 and, regarding note 6, the Pro Vice-Chancellor reported that over thirty architect firms had expressed interest in the new Roehampton Library project. The Registrar & University Secretary was chairing a Project Board to develop the project brief and oversee selection of the architects. Negotiations were also underway regarding funding for the project.

3. QAA Review of the University (Paper RSS08/3)

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the recent review of the University by the Quality Assurance Agency had proceeded very well, and that the initial letter received from QAA set out most encouraging key findings.

The Agency had commended many instances of national good practice at Roehampton, believed to be the highest number QAA had identified so far at any University. Of particular interest to the meeting, the QAA had commended the Student Partnership and the way the University listens to the student voice and engages with students at all levels, including via Student Senate and effective collaboration with the Students' Union. In turn senior staff present commended student input into the Review, both the preparation led by RSU and participation by a wide variety of students during the QAA visits.

A full report of findings and recommendations was expected in March.

4. Students as Partners to enhance Learning and Teaching (Paper RSS08/4)

The Deputy Provost, Professor Corcoran, presented a paper from the Director of Learning & Teaching regarding student participation in enhancement of the learning experience. Recent staff-led projects involving students had been very fruitful in identifying ways forward in teaching practices, and now the Learning & Teaching Enhancement Unit was working to give students the lead in choosing and conducting the projects.

Students at the meeting were invited to suggest potential projects of this kind, and those suggested included teaching and study methods, importance of face-to-face feedback opportunities, ensuring effective group work for assessments and employability advice to help students focus on the range of options available to them, and articulation of their experience to potential employers. The last of these in particular was considered to be essential and would be discussed further at the next Student Senate. The value of input from Roehampton alumni was highlighted.

5. Communicating with students and alumni (Paper RSS08/5)

The Chair introduced a paper seeking students' views on methods of communication with applicants, students and alumni, and their relative value and effectiveness. The meeting also considered the 'Key facts' and 'Looking forward' publicity documents in relation to this item.

Students commented on the contents of the publicity material, designed for a more commercial audience, and also the understanding and interpretations expected from the information provided to them as applicants. They made suggestions about the aspects of the Roehampton experience they considered might be emphasised more effectively, including opportunities for scholarships and bursaries, and the value of the College communities, of sports activities and the Students' Union. The importance of reaching the large population of potential applicants who would be non-residents was emphasised, and also communicating effectively with non-resident students. It was generally recognised that Roehampton was known in certain geographical areas, including overseas, because of specific links, and less well-known outside the London region.

Discussion about current means of communication suggested that e-mail was not much favoured by students, but a range of other methods such as texts, video-feeds, a regular electronic newsletter and more recent developments such as 'Instagram' would be popular with current students.

Also under this item, the University's development of alumni relations was discussed. Students were keen to maintain links with Roehampton via electronic communication and/or a mailed newsletter, and they welcomed the idea of getting together regularly (appealing for overseas students in particular) and being invited to return to Roehampton for events or to advise students regarding employment experience. Alumni presence at Graduation events was also favoured. Students also considered that financial requests from the University would be appropriate, as long as they related to specific projects.

6. 'Big Amnesty Feedback' Campaign (Paper RSS08/6)

The meeting was advised by Jon Carter (Campaigns Intern) that the RSU would be launching a feedback questionnaire campaign designed to cover students of all levels and years of study, to receive information and views on students' academic experiences at Roehampton. Information collected by RSU prior to the QAA review, and feedback in the NSS (covering final-year students only) suggested that giving all students the chance to comment on academic experience would provide a lot of useful information to consider in relation to enhancing learning and teaching at Roehampton.

The campaign would be launched in the last week of the Spring Term to coincide with the annual programme representatives conference.

7. Student-led Budget proposals (Paper RSS08/7)

The Pro Vice-Chancellor provided information in the Paper on the spend so far this year of the second allocation of £50k student-led funds, ring-fenced as part of the Student Partnership. The areas earmarked for funding included Student Life, 24-hour Library opening, Library-learning resources and Gym and social spaces development.

Steve Molyneaux of RSU outlined proposals from the Students' Union for use of the next tranche of funding, principally that £15k should go towards continued funding of a Societies student intern post. The meeting discussed the other current RSU proposals, listed in the Paper, and some further ideas. Those listed comprised a range of both cheaper and more costly proposals, and final consideration of the areas to be funded would occur at the next meeting of Student Senate in May.

8. Student-led Teaching Awards 2013 (Paper RSS08/8)

Steve Molyneaux of RSU advised the meeting that the Student-led teaching awards, first launched very successfully during last academic year, would be repeated this year. Nominations from students for staff in the various categories listed in the Paper would be open from February to April, with awards made at the Learning and Teaching Conference at the end of this Term.

9. 'Top of your agenda' item

Students present were invited to raise matters currently important to them, and this covered a wide range of aspects, both general in nature and specific to departments or individuals.

The wide range of matters raised would be noted or pursued as appropriate by the staff members present at the meeting.

10. Date of next Meeting

Wednesday 8 May 2013

Andrew Skinner
Deputy University Secretary, Secretary to Student Senate
February 2013