

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

COUNCIL/SENATE

STUDENT SENATE

SUMMARY REPORT ON THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2015

1. Report from the last meeting, and matters arising

Senior staff reported back to Student Senate on progress made in relation to consider and limit the impact of current building works on resident students. Meetings had been held between student representatives from Digby Stuart College and senior staff, who had subsequently further negotiated with building contractors about noise levels and when work would commence in the mornings, especially at weekends.

The discussions with students also led to accommodation fee discounts for students who had been severely affected by the works activity.

In order to alleviate the situation, additional study spaces had been provided in the three other colleges.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

2. Proposals for Student-led element of the University Budget, 2015-16

At the previous meeting of Student Senate, the following items had received most support for student-led funding:

- Student Activity Grant Funding for student events which needed pump-priming
- A specific Student Welcome Event for students living off-campus
- Student Internship(s)

As it was considered that funding these options would not utilise the full £50k, consideration was given to further proposals also popular with students. The following additional proposals were favoured after extensive discussion at the meeting:

- Funding of three internship posts for one year in RSU
- 'Bootcamp' intensive training for RSU Sabbatical Officers at start of their terms (with intention of ensuring sustainability by cascading experience in future years)
- Improved tap-water facilities across the campuses

All of these six proposals would be costed and incorporated into the University Budget proposals for 2015-16.

Under this item it was also noted that the University had recently agreed to contribute £65,000 to the Growhampton project, in order to ensure sustainability when the initial NUS funding concludes later this year.

3. National Student Survey: addressing questions on personal development

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a discussion based on questions from the National Student Survey, asking students to advise how they would respond to the following statements about their time at University:

- 'The course helped me to present myself with confidence.'
- 'My communication skills have improved.'
- 'As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.'

The discussion ranged across students responses to all three questions concurrently, and the following points emerged:

- Students benefit from working in smaller groups, either in lectures or seminars, and opportunities for these learning environments increase in later years of courses
- Teacher education courses offer a wide range of opportunities to build confidence, especially in the classroom on school placements
- Mentoring roles in some subject and programme areas, where students in later years advise new entrants develop communication skills
- Taking on roles such as programme representatives, flat representatives help develop a sense of responsibility as well as confidence and communication skills

The following were considered to be major confidence builders for students at Roehampton:

- Participation in the 'Frontrunner' Programme
- Working for RSU, and running for election
- Taking a role on a Roehampton committee
- Becoming a Programme Representative
- Becoming a Student Senator
- Becoming a Student Ambassador
- Joining a sports team, with outside fixture opportunities
- Taking up Study Abroad opportunities

4. Careers support at Roehampton

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised the meeting that the University was reviewing support for students embarking upon their career, by seeking to enhance three key strands of employability advice:

- Skills delivered via the curriculum
- Social Capital enhancement by gaining experience and networking
- Self-presentation skills development

Roehampton was keen for students to be able to progress quickly into graduate job opportunities rather than into more routine employment. The Career Mentoring scheme and Frontrunner Leadership Programme offered useful opportunities, although the latter was expensive and not fully taken up.

Student senators were asked for their views on the most effective careers support they have encountered at Roehampton, or would like to see available. The discussion indicated that some programmes were effective in building in employability skills into the curriculum, including placement opportunities, but this was variable across programmes. Where students were aware of the Employability staff team, they believed it to be useful mainly for CV format advice rather than providing help in recognition of an individual's skills or discussion of career

opportunities less specifically subject-related, which would be welcomed. More advice on interview techniques is also essential.

Students and staff present considered that early student engagement with employability advice was highly desirable, but recognised that this was not high on students' agendas early in their studies. The development and provision of a module available to all (possibly on-line and perhaps compulsory) addressing employability skills would certainly be a way forward.

This input was welcomed and would be used by senior staff to inform future developments in employability support at the University.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5. Update on the 'W.I.S.H' Project

RSU members advised that responses received from students surveyed about the 'Ideal student hub', and those taking part in focus-groups, had been used in a presentation made to the recent Council Awayday in the context of capital development plans. The input would inform further decisions on student facilities in the future.

6. Update from the Students' Union (RSU President)

Siobhan Kelly, recently re-elected President of the Roehampton Students' Union, advised the meeting about the roles of the 2015-16 sabbatical officers (Vice-Presidents) and aspects of the RSU Strategic Plan which would be pursued during the coming academic year.

7. 'Top of your agenda'

Topics raised here included students' very positive responses to voting registration for the General Election, and the success of a recent hustings event at the University.

RSU would be running a Mental Health Awareness and Mindfulness Week in the near future.

8. Farewells

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Vice-Chancellor thanked all student senators for their input to the meetings during the year, and gave those who would be leaving Roehampton shortly best wishes for the future on behalf of the University.

9. Next Meeting

2pm on Wednesday 4 November 2015

*Andrew Skinner
Deputy University Secretary
Secretary to Student Senate
June 2015*