

# UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

## SENATE/COUNCIL

### Summary Report on 18th meeting of Student Senate held on Wednesday 4 May 2016

#### **1. RSU Elections**

The results of the recent RSU elections were noted, with congratulations to Jack Wilcock who would become President of RSU 2016-17, and to Marie Johansen and George Cole who had been re-elected as Vice Presidents Education and Welfare respectively. Particular thanks were given by all staff and students present to Siobhan Kelly, outgoing President of RSU, who was attending her last meeting of Student Senate.

#### **2. Report on the last meeting**

The Report was confirmed by those present as an appropriate record of business. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted particularly the quality of the discussion on the Prevent duty; the University had now made its self-assessment submission to HEFCE and was awaiting a response. It was also noted that arrangements for attendance monitoring, discussed at the last meeting, were now in train.

#### **3. Funding Student Societies**

The Vice-Chancellor gave an oral report on plans related to Funding Student societies. Senior staff recognised the importance of student societies, especially as meeting places in the early months of the student year, and had already supported these financially in various ways. However overall the societies were in debt to the extent of some £10k, which was unsustainable. The Financial Strategy Group was therefore proposing to cancel the debt, and also to provide further financial support from the University to pump prime activities early in the academic year, as had been supported by Student Senate via the student-led budget in the past. This proposal was welcomed by all present and discussion at the meeting about how to determine levels of financial support favoured a banding process identifying small, medium and large societies rather than on a per capita basis.

#### **4. Student-led Budget 2016-17**

The University Secretary had asked for proposals related to the Student-led Budget 2016-17 prior to the meeting, and these were summarised in a meeting paper. The Director of Finance confirmed that the principle behind the funding was investment with a finite end-date, such as internships. Each proposal, which covered a wide range of suggestions, was introduced and considered by the meeting. The six proposals which were agreed for funding from the student-led budget were as follows (listed in approximate cost order):

- Part-time internships
- Engagement project for off-campus students
- Black History Month events and BME and diverse cultures-focused engagement
- Free lockers on campus and lockable device-charging stations
- De-stressing events around examination periods
- Pop-up cinema kit for general use

## **5. Student Facilities and Building Works**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor gave the meeting an update on Student facilities and building **works** at the University. At the Chadwick Hall/Downshire House site landscaping work on the grounds behind the buildings was progressing following the completed refurbishment of Downshire House which was now occupied by Glion. The Digby Stuart Accommodation (comprising some 350 rooms plus conference facilities) was now in an advanced stage of completion, with hoardings coming down soon and the establishment of trees in Father Ryan's Walk. Work on the new Library was in progress and currently ahead of schedule. The noise levels associated with all the building works currently seem to be moderate and manageable.

## **6. Teaching Effectiveness Framework**

The final items addressed in this section of the agenda was the Teaching Effectiveness Framework (TEF), a new and far-reaching government initiative designed to determine the quality of universities' teaching provision which would complement the already established Research Effectiveness Framework. The Deputy Provost (Learning & Teaching) set out the basis of a series of stages, and varying measures, over coming years to determine individual institutions' teaching quality which could ultimately affect fee levels Universities could charge. Roehampton has been monitoring teaching quality and experience, from curriculum range to support infrastructure, for a long time before the TEF was introduced, and there is much good practice already evident. However senior staff have actively invested time and money in programme review, improving teaching spaces, and remodelling the careers service at Roehampton. The Careers Service will address placement opportunities more comprehensively, and also endeavour to ensure that students are able to consider a wide range career options that are not necessarily subject-related. There would also be a more interactive approach to careers advice, across all years of study.

## **7. Yik Yak Social Media platform**

In this section of the agenda three shorter items were addressed. The first of this was the University's policy towards the Yik Yak social media platform which is anonymous and appears to carry contentious and sometimes vindictive posts against individuals. Discussion commencing around whether Yik Yak should be prohibited later resolved itself in a decision not to do so as this would raise the profile. Instead monitoring of offensive posts by Communications Department (which could ask Yik Yak to delate posts) was preferred.

## **8. RSU Update**

Siobhan Kelly provided an update from RSU which covered initially the outstanding success and interest in the recent RSU elections, and the comprehensive preparations for the coming annual RSU Student Ball. Current areas of concern among students include provision of gender-neutral toilets, and also of appropriate rest spaces for students. Various problems raised by resident students at Mount Clare were being addressed by senior staff.

## **9. Making the most of Student Senate**

The University Secretary advised that Student Senate had now run for six years, and as this was the last meeting of 2015-16, he would welcome feedback on Making the most of Student Senate from all involved during this year. An opportunity to say what might be improved would be given through a web-based questionnaire sent to all current members.

## **10. Top of Your Agenda**

In this regular item students told the meeting about a range of matters of particular interest to them as individuals. On this occasion these included events such as the coming May Monarch celebrations at Whitelands, the RSU Awards Ceremony, the Froebel student-led Holiday to Prague, Southlands boat-party and various end-of term events across the four colleges. There were also plans to increase involvement of mature students and the BME student community in events.

Both staff and students noted very high response rates in the NSS Survey, which was valuable to all. Some continuing concerns about the quality of Roehampton's sports facilities were addressed by the Registrar who is leading various efforts to provide the best facilities in the context of the campuses and local opportunities.

At the end of the meeting the Vice-Chancellor thanked all present for their commitment to Student Senate this year, adding best wishes for the future to the students who would be leaving the University in the summer.

*Andrew Skinner*  
*University Secretary & Secretary to Student Senate*  
*May 2016*