

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Meeting held on
Wednesday 4th November, 2020 at 6:30pm

Present: Beth Garrett (BG) - FHES Advocate/ Chair
Ektaa Vadgama (EV) - FHES Advocate
Genine Taylor (GT) - FHES Advocate/Deputy Chair
Bev Adams (BA) - JH Advocate
Lillian Koroma (LK) - JH Advocate
Tracy Afriyie (TA) - FBL Advocate
Yeqi Zhou (YZ) - Vice President Education
Anthony Stepniak (AS) - PGR Part-Time Officer

Apologies: None

Absent: Drishtee Bhowaneesing
Stefan
Santosh

Minutes: Beth Garrett

1. Apologies for non-attendance

No apologies sent.

2. Chairs Actions

None to be noted.

3. Actions arising

None to be noted.

4. Reports

VP Education (YZ) – YZ has worked on creating and promoting 'Tell Yeqi' – met with IT to communicate students' feedback gathered about teaching and learning online. Suggestions included improving WiFi in halls etc. YZ has been involved in organising an event where four speakers will be coming to talk to students about public speaking. Preparing a campaign on bias with the Sabbatical team. Hosted drop-in sessions which some students have attended (limited due to COVID). Has been thinking about a campaign which may link to the suggestions of a couple of Faculty Advocates - based on ensuring students are through this lockdown – YZ is happy to support Faculty Advocates with this and will liaise further.

Report unanimously accepted.

BA (Joint Honours) – Attended Education Committee and Student Council and continued to be present on the Faculty Facebook page. BA raised with question of Joint Honours' students' identity and how this is managed between their subject areas.

GT question – what is the purpose of a separate Joint Honours Faculty if students tend to lean more towards one faculty than another? BA asserts suggests there are potentially too

many places that Joint Honours fit into and report to, in addition to the individual subject areas which students may approach directly.

Report unanimously accepted.

EV (FHES) – EV Discusses ‘Campaign for Change’ ideas regarding student engagement. There is a theme of not much student engagement, so EV suggests perhaps having something like a points system whereby, when students engage with advocates etc, they get points on their student card with associated benefits such as money off food. EV will continue to develop this idea. Organised faculty forums with GT and BG. EV raised concern following recent communication with a Course Advocate who was concerned about anonymity of their feedback, particularly when discussing other students who may be disruptive. EV proposed either an anti-bullying campaign or having a platform where students can confidentially raise their concerns.

GT has been planning a campaign called ‘Here to Hear’ which aims to provide students with someone to listen when they need to voice concerns and share them with someone. GT will liaise with EV and YZ regarding this campaign and see if they can combine their ideas.

Report unanimously accepted.

GT (FHES) – GT has been supporting a student with an appeal regarding their course which eventually had a positive outcome. GT is consistently present on Facebook groups and shares a lot of key information and events for students. Has attended meetings with CS to support both Course and Faculty Advocacy. GT has attended and supported several SU events, both in person and online. Met with SPT and other SU staff to develop an idea for ‘Campaign for Change’. Attended a Unitemps employability training which provided a different perspective on the Faculty Advocate role. Also attended changemaker sessions and deputy chair training.

EV commented on how active GT is on Facebook and her engagement with students on there. TA asks what GT’s Facebook account and pages are and what they are used for. GT explains how they helped with creating a Mature Students Society and promoting events etc.

Report unanimously accepted.

LK (JH) – Aiming to be a bit more active on the Faculty Facebook group to bring more awareness of the Joint Honours identity. Some students feel very connected with both subjects; however, others don’t feel they have the support. Would like to reach out to students so they know they are not alone going into the next lockdown. LK has been communicating with Course Advocates and has found quite a few third year students having problems trying to merge their dissertations across their two subject areas. Students are also due to have 2 hours of face-to-face sessions a week but some have not found this helpful.

GT asks a question as she knows a Joint Honours student who reported their face-to-face session each week is a tutorial and not a class. The face-to-face class being offered is not in

their major subject area so they do not attend that face-to-face class. Question raised about what is acceptable for the two hours of face-to-face.

Report unanimously accepted.

TA (FBL) – First time attending Education Committee, TA was unsure on the process and what she needed to do prior to the meeting. She has been trying to reach out to Course and Faculty Advocates in the Faculty but not getting much response. TA attended a focus group with GT and CS on how to improve Course Advocate engagement and structure Faculty Forums.

TA asked for support and whether she can copy ideas from other FAs? BG notified Faculty Advocates of the new Education Committee Facebook group for this year and suggested all should all join and use to share ideas.

TA also asked about reports, their purpose and what happens if the report is not accepted. BG clarified and directed TA towards CS for further support.

Report unanimously accepted.

BG (FHES) – BG has been supporting CS and ZN with Course Advocacy training and creating marketing materials to promote Course Advocate and Faculty Advocates in the by-elections. Worked alongside EV and GT to organise Faculty Forums which are upcoming this term. Met with the Associate Dean of the Faculty (SW) and GT to discuss student voice and how to promote this in both the student body and academic staff. One idea was to produce a video about advocacy which could be shared with students via NILE.

LK questions about a video idea – the suggestion is to make a collaborative video across the Faculties so we can all support each other. EV is happy to put a video together if each FA sends a short clip over. TA suggests sharing on social media as a lot of her peers and course mates are active on social media too. BG suggests coming up with a script between us. EV offers to take the lead on this with support from TA – all accepted this.

GT highlights the point for concern on BG's report – regarding how we can ensure students are supported during the COVID pandemic and especially during the second lockdown. LK suggested it might be nice to have a way to reach out to students, particularly those who are staying on campus throughout the lockdown or those who are on placement still. Is there a way we can have a support group or something to keep in touch throughout? GT suggests taking this to Student Council as a concern and something we can encourage the University or SU to provide a platform or forum to support students. GT also points out that students' education is also likely to be affected. BG to follow this up.

Report unanimously accepted.

5. Course Advocacy Update

400+ Course Advocates trained and training is ongoing. Course Advocacy criteria communicated through the newsletter. Any questions about Course Advocacy are directed towards CS.

6. Faculty Forums

Faculty Forums should be organised now. BA and TA questioned what they are and how they work. BG provides explanation and asserts they are a more formal platform for communication with CA this year and to liaise with CS to organise these for their faculties.

7.

8. GT Discussion Point

GT raises the point of having clocks in other buildings at the University; other than the big clock in the Learning Hub there are none around campus and students would find it helpful. TA happy to second the decision.

9. PGR Updates

Second meeting from PGRC meeting. PGR students had issues with the by-election for their roles as PGR students had difficulty with logging in and voting on the website. Reps have volunteered, uncontested, for roles in the meantime. Discussed the effect of the lockdown on the PGR space – guidance is to work from home where possible. The Chair of PGRC is bringing the proposal to council to adapt the structure so that it sits alongside Education Committee, this was discussed in more detail in the last Education Committee meeting.

All accepted the PGRC minutes.

Any Other Business

AS asked how we felt as an Education Committee about the University's response to the new lockdown and their intention to maintain face to face teaching. GT says she has seen a lot of students on Facebook groups feeling apprehensive and worried about their living situations – the education is not necessarily their priority, they want to be at home and then will think about education as a secondary issue. How supported are students if they do leave the University to be at home for the lockdown? AS questions whether there is a consistent response from courses to support students. This will be considered when bringing the aforementioned point to Student Council regarding students' support during COVID.

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 2nd December, 6:30-8:30pm.