

Student Representative Committee

Meeting held in Union 1, Frenchay Campus, at 17:30 on Tuesday 30th January

012: The Chair introduced himself and welcomed the Reps present to the second SRC of the year and set out the agenda and purpose of the meeting.

013: The Chair explained that he and the other SU Presidents had been working on lobbying the University around course costs with a specific focus of the cost of degree completion for material heavy programmes. The LDR for A&D has been working to raise awareness of these issues as learning outcomes can be affected by material costs. The Chair is now involved in a wider piece of work looking at hidden costs across the board and is hoping for a more generous package from the University (including greater transparency of costs) for all students.

The Student Experience Awards is back and nominations for Reps and staff are open now, the Chair encourages all present to think about who they would like to reward and to come along for a fantastic night.

The Chair announced that a Student Rep Conference focused on CPD and up0skilling will be taking place on February 24th and encouraged all present to attend.

All the Presidents are holding surgeries across the different campuses to meet and speak with a diverse range of students; Reps should look out for announcements about where the next surgery will be taking place.

The Education Officer was not present for this item.

014: The Chair explained that the University is making significant changes to module evaluations and that Reps have been given the opportunity to be asked first what they would like to see in these evaluations. Reps broke out into three groups to discuss what feedback they think is important, how they would like the evaluations to proceed and what they would then like to do with that information. The outcomes of these discussions are summarised below:

Feedback

- Module evaluations should only focus on the content and delivery of those modules and not on related services
- Questions on content should be based around not only how interesting/engaging it is but also how it relates to the overall degree and its clear relationship to the assessment
- The link between content, delivery and understanding should not be lost
- Questions on structure should be based around the access and consistency of the module; e.g. are all teaching staff teaching to the same standard, do they have the same expectations, are they giving the same support, is the assessment the same for those on different programmes taking the same module?
- Non-applicable should be available as an answer
- There should be an option to offer improvements on the learning and teaching experience
- The fewer questions, the better

Communication

- It should be clear how the feedback is going to be used and how it has/will improve the module (both short and long term)
- Teaching staff should make it clear how much they appreciate and need this feedback
- The timing should be such as to not coincide with deadlines and hand ins
- Mid-module reviews should be used to demonstrate immediate impacts

Using the Data

- The data should be displayed through infographics so it can be understood and used by Reps
- Evaluations should be a discussion point at SRSFs and in classes
- Comparisons across different modules or across the same module from different years should be given to provide context
- A simple Stop Start Keep format can be used to demonstrate what has been learned and what will change

015: The Secretary explained that the University is interested in better understanding students' attitudes regarding contract cheating and what they know about plagiarism. Those present were asked to give their opinions and experiences, and those of the students they represent. Their feedback is summarised below:

- Information is prevalent at the beginning of a student's University career but is not reinforced in subsequent years
- Although plagiarism is well understood, what constitutes cheating is less well known; e.g. is asking a friend or family member to proofread cheating? Is it always cheating if money changes hands? Where is the line?
- A small number of students reported that they had received direct marketing emails from contract cheating services to their UWE email addresses; otherwise they were prevalent on social media
- Most Reps reported knowing of students on their course who had used or at least considered using these services
- Students were unanimous in agreeing that the students they knew who had accessed these services were not lazy but suffering from a series of inter-related issues
- The support services for students suffering from stress or who have specific learning differences are not well advertised and despite few students accessing this support, the services are still under-resourced
- The writing fellows were praised for the support they offer but it was noted that their numbers were few and the time they had to offer students was short
- The processes around not submitting work and the use of mitigating circumstances are unclear
- Many Reps agreed that for students with English as a second language, the normal stresses and issues were compounded
- There are insufficient sessions run on essay writing skills (especially for programmes that are not naturally 'essay heavy') resulting in students panicking close to deadlines as they feel they lack the skills to succeed
- Explanations as to what is expected from assessments and how they relate to module content were often lacking or unclear
- Deadlines for multiple modules and multiple pieces of work are clustered too close together, making prioritisation a challenge
- The amount of work required for an assessment is not reflective of the weighting of that assessment; assessment components making up only a small proportion of a module's overall grade are often lost or forgotten about. Students would not use contract cheating services for large assessments which are deemed far more important but would for smaller components which are left until the end or are deemed less important
- Academic staff often seem worried about how much information/help they can offer to students, leading to a situation wherein less advice is offered in order to avoid offering too much
- Reps agreed that greater use of exemplar work, more explanations of why and how marks are awarded, the use of multiple assessment points, equal weighting to assessment components, greater opportunities to submit draft essays, spreading out deadlines, more

'touch points' for long assignments (such as portfolios and dissertations), addressing the (perceived) lack of relationship between assessment and module content and supporting academic skills were the key things needed to remove the need for any form of cheating.

016: The Chair and the VP Sports and Health explained that they were working on a proposal of authorised absences to bring to the University and how this could benefit a range of students. Those present were asked to take this information back to the students they represent and to send in any feedback directly to the Chair or VP S+H.

017: All Rep present were encouraged to consider either nominating themselves or recommending a friend to stand in The leadership Race and to take part in the upcoming elections.

018: Student Minds will be on campus on February 13 looking for student volunteers to receive mental health and wellbeing training; those interested should contact the Chair.

The Postgraduate Officer explained that there is currently a business competition for undergrads which UWE is putting a team together for. This is open to all students, not just those in the Business Department who would like the opportunity to represent UWE at a national level. Those interested should contact either the PG Officer, the Chair or the Representation Coordinators.

019: The date of the next SRC will be March 20th 2018, location TBC.