

STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT, 28 NOVEMBER 2017

JAMIE JORDON, VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION

COURSE COSTS

Continuing to work with the University around course costs has remained a priority for me. Currently, students in ACE (Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries, and Education), mainly those in Art and Design, currently have to raise around £10,000 to go towards their end of year degree shows. Feedback from these students has been mainly negative, especially due to FET (Faculty of Environment and Technology) having their degree show costs covered by the University. I have raised this issue with both the Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience and the Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean of ACE. Currently, the University are in talks about making this fairer across the institution, rather than different faculties offering different experiences.

FET is home to a number of creative courses, so require a number of materials to go towards final year projects. Students in the faculty have found that, due to this, completing their final year project can come at a cost. After liaising with the PVC Student Experience and FET Executive, students in FET will now receive £75 towards their final year projects.

Another cost that has come to our attention is the cost of laundry in UWE Bristol Accommodation. A Student Idea was submitted and it has become the first Student Idea that has been graded with a first. We have raised this with the PVC Student Experience who has asked us to research into the sector at how other institutions operate. We are currently in progress of doing so and will take a report back to aid our lobbying for improvements.

ATTAINMENT GAP AND THE CURRICULUM

Nationally, as well as at UWE Bristol, there is a BME attainment gap, where BME students are less likely to achieve 'good honours' (a 1st or 2:1), than non-BME students. Nationally, in 14/15 it was reported that there was a 15.3pp attainment gap, whilst in 15/16 at UWE Bristol, the attainment gap was noted as 18.3pp. The statistics reported have seen a 3.2pp attainment gap increase since 13/14, as well as the BME students receiving a 3rd at almost double the rate as their non-BME counterparts.

To begin to tackle this increasing issue, as part of our Global Majority Campaign, we launched our “why is my curriculum white?” campaign. This campaign looks at a variety of aspects of the curriculum, including syllabus, learning environment, delivery and support and assessment.

NUS’ ‘Race for Equality’ has given us an insight to how BME students feel when it comes to their curriculum. However, this is a national snapshot, so we have launched our own survey to understand the feelings and needs of UWE students. This data will help us to tailor and shape the campaign to UWE. We are also looking to host an event around the theme of South East Asia Colonialism.

ENGAGEMENT

One of our team priorities this year is to make sure that we are effectively engaging with students, so that we can have a better understanding of the student experience. We have started hosting surgeries at various UWE sites, where students can come and have chat to us about anything to do with their time at UWE. This provides us a platform to collect on-the-ground feedback and to then action anything. As satellite campuses have very unique and distinct needs, we are ensuring that every other surgery that we host is at one. We hope that this will help us to better understand the student population based at these sites and what they want from The Students’ Union. We began a project called “The Big Convo”, where we started door knocking at UWE Bristol halls of residence. We utilised this to introduce The Students’ Union and seek initial feedback from these students.

SUSTAINABILITY

As the Full Time Officer who takes the lead on sustainability this year, I have provided a few updates on related projects and successes. The Students’ Union were proud to attend the Green Gown Awards 2017 in Manchester on Wednesday 15 November. We were delighted that Paul Dingley (Licensed Trade Manager) and Thomas Haines (Sustainability Officer 2016-2017) were shortlisted and recognised. It was great to see Thomas Haines receive Highly Commended for all his passion and commitment. It was great to also see UWE Bristol take away two Highly Commended Awards also – congratulations to everyone involved in creating positive changes.

The Students’ Union have become the first Students’ Union to commit to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Accord that was launched at the World Environmental Education Congress in Vancouver on September 9 2017.

After achieving “Excellent” for last academic year in NUS Green Impact, we are determined to defend our position as “Students’ Union of the Year: Commercial”. The Students’ Union are underway in planning and developing our sustainability plan for 2017-2017, which will be signed off by the Board of Trustees on Tuesday 5 December and submitted for Student Council to see.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Erin and I have begun work towards securing students authorised absences from lectures and other learning events. The University are adopting an attendance and engagement policy from academic year 2018-2019, and as such attendance will be recorded at learning events. The University are using this mechanism to ensure that students do not fall through the gaps. By combining attendance with learner analytics (these stats include things such as signing into Blackboard or coursework submissions), the University can reach out to students who may be vulnerable to offer them extra support. Whilst we agree with this approach the University are taking, we also recognise that there are times where students are unable to attend for reasons such as BUCS fixtures or faith commitments.

We have researched into what other institutions offer, what basis students are allowance an authorised absence, and the agreements of doing so (such as keeping up with the work). Alongside this research, we will be launching a short survey to understand how various groups of students are affected by potentially having to miss a lecture. Once we have collected sufficient data, we will be compiling this into a report to lobby UWE Bristol to allow students, with sufficient reason and conditions, to have an authorised absence.

OTHER INFORMATION

Total hours worked to date (as of writing): 809.25 / 777.00

A range of meetings attended since July*:

- Academic Board
- Academic Literacy Forum
- Athena SWAN Sat Meetings
- Attendance Recording and Learner Analytics Meetings
- Board of Trustees
- Collaborative Provision Committee
- Connecting UWE students across the world
- Equality Analysis
- Executive Meeting

- Finance and General Purposes Committee
- Green Impact
- International Student Experience Group
- Learning Environments Advisory Board
- Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee
- LGBT+ History Month Planning
- Library Developments
- Mental Health Working Group
- PAL Stakeholder's Group Meeting
- Readinglists.uwe.ac.uk
- Sustainability Board
- Teaching Spaces User Group Meeting
- Various one-to-one's (SU and UWE)

A range of other appointments since July*:

- Bristol Pride Gala
- Graduation Ceremonies
- Green Gown Awards
- Head of Digital Learning Recruitment
- Induction Lectures
- International Student Orientation
- Lead and Change Training
- SHAPE Visit
- South West Trustee Training
- Strategic Planning
- Students' Unions 2017
- Surgeries
- The Big Convo
- Training Away Days
- Welcome Events
- Why is my curriculum white?
- World Mental Health Day
- Zones Conference

**I've not listed every single meeting and event since July due to the space this would take up. I've also attended multiple of some due to the timescale of July-November.*

If you have any questions, feel free to drop me an email on vpeducation@uwe.ac.uk