



Meeting: COUNCIL/SENATE/STUDENTS' UNION COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday April 20 2021 at 2.15pm

Venue: Via MS Teams

Present:

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| Prof I White (Chair) | Vice-Chancellor and President |
| Dr M Harney | Appointed by Council |
| Mr T Hollingsworth | Appointed by Council |
| Professor P Lambert | Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) |
| Mr F Masala | President, The SU |
| Ms C Morgan | Student Representative – until minute 1264 |
| Ms K Robinson | Elected by Senate |
| Dr J Troyer | Elected by Senate – until minute 1264 |
| Ms A Willingham | Education Officer, The SU |

In Attendance:

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|----------------|---|
| Mrs J Loveys | Director of AHS |
| Mr A Payne | Director of Student Services |
| Ms N Passmore | Chief Executive, The SU |
| Ms E Pollinger | Secretary |
| Ms R Sheer | Acting Director of Academic Registry |
| Mr M Williams | Director of Finance – until minute 1259 (2) |
| Dr C Wilson | Vice President, Student Experience |

Apologies:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Mr G Barnstaple | Student Representative |
| Ms K Maluta | Student Representative |
| Ms J Medland | Project Manager (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience) |

ACTION

1259. CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, he congratulated Annie Willingham who had been elected as the new President of the Students' Union and who would be taking office in June. He welcomed Nicky Passmore, the new Chief Executive of the Students' Union who was attending her first meeting of the Committee.

1260. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest to declare apart from all being students, staff or Council members of the University.

1261. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2021 (Paper CSSU20/21-024) were APPROVED as a correct record.

1262. MATTERS ARISING

- Minute 1244 – Senate Effectiveness Review

At the December meeting of CSSU the Committee had deferred decisions regarding reviewing itself based on the recommendations of the Senate Effectiveness Review. The Chair noted that this piece of work was still pending and would be addressed in the autumn.

- Minute 1251 – Decolonisation paper recommended to Council

At the February meeting of CSSU the Committee had discussed a paper updating on the progress of the 2020/21 Top Ten issue: “Create and commit to a specific action plan for decolonising the curriculum”. The decision of the Committee had been to recommend the paper to Council to inform their workstream on becoming a more inclusive university. The Chair noted that the Decolonisation paper had been accepted on to the agenda for the May meeting of Council for noting.

1263. STUDENTS’ UNION BUSINESS

(1) Tuition fee refunds

The Chair welcomed Martin Williams, Director of Finance, who had joined the meeting to participate in the discussion on this item. Francesco Masala introduced this item noting that the Students’ Union had been hearing from increasing numbers of students who were dissatisfied with their student experience under lockdown and coronavirus restriction this academic year and were calling for a refund of their tuition fees. He said that students had been examining the 2019-20 financial statement of the University which seemed to show that University finances were stable enough to allow for blanket tuition fee refunds.

As a representative of the student voice he requested that the senior management of the University meet with concerned students firstly to give more context to the University’s finances and secondly to detail the advocacy work of the University at Government level.

The Chair agreed that a meeting should take place and noted that the University had been advocating for increased support for students including advocating that the English Government should at least match the Welsh Government’s spending commitments on hardship funding. The Chair noted that there was widespread disappointment across the sector and

amongst the staff of the University that the Government announcement at Easter had not prioritised a return to in-person teaching until 17 May 2021.

The Director of Finance confirmed that he would be happy to participate in a meeting with concerned students, he suggested that the numbers at the meeting be relatively small so that the detail of the University's financial position could be explained in more depth. He also noted that funding and finances would be separate issues.

The Committee RESOLVED that the Vice-President Student Experience would work with the Student's Union to convene a meeting between concerned students and the senior management of the University

CW/FM

(2) Drugs harm reduction

Francesco Masala presented a paper describing a Students' Union campaign calling on the University to adopt a harm reduction approach to student drug use. (Paper CSSU20/21-025).

He noted that the campaign was seeking to shift the University's approach to drug consumption to harm reduction, following the Bristol model. This would include signposting to relevant organisations providing harm reduction advice and would provide reagent test kits to students via the Students' Union.

The campaign had proposed the creation of a working group to evaluate the implementation of harm reduction approaches in the short, medium, and long term. The group would make use of the researchers in the fields of Psychology and Pharmacology within the University and would be led by expert and legal advice.

The Committee discussed the proposal and was supportive. The Committee noted the importance of a clear communications strategy to educate and inform including wellbeing advice and appropriate consultation with the police. The working group should consider legal highs and potential issues around home cultivation and possession with an intent to supply.

The Committee noted that it was important that the relationship between students and Security was a supportive one. The Chair noted that a representative from Security should be involved in the working group.

The Committee RESOLVED that the Vice-President Student Experience would work with the Student's Union and Catherine Bailey to produce a project proposal with associated costs. This project proposal would be considered at the Student Experience Board which could then refer onwards to the University Executive Board for a funding decision.

CW/FM

The Committee NOTED the report.

(3) Student Life Survey – March data

Francesco Masala presented a paper reporting on the March data from the Students' Union monthly Student Life Survey. (Paper CSSU20/21-026).

He noted that at this time of year it was usual for the survey to identify trends in concerns over employability and academic workload and academic achievement. He noted that more worrying trends were emerging with student concerns about not feeling part of a community, poor mental health and wellbeing and loneliness.

The Chair noted that it was sad to see the impact that lockdown had had on students. The Director of Student Services noted that Student Services were there to support students who had concerns about their physical and mental health. He reported that the Wellbeing team were noticing an increase in cases of severe self-harm and suicidal ideation and were finding that the NHS and charitable organisations that they would usually liaise with were under resourced and overstretched. Annie Willingham noted that Student Services were already working at capacity, but that student needs were likely to increase with exams approaching.

Francesco Masala noted that the data from the Student Survey is shared with the Wellbeing Steering Group but that it was important that the data is seen by committees that can make practical recommendations.

AW/RS

Annie Willingham noted that some students were being offered the option to defer when they were really asking for support. The Acting Director of Academic Registry invited the Students' Union to discuss and have input into messaging to students regarding deferrals.

The Committee noted that it was important to look at the April Student Survey data to see whether the gradual lifting of coronavirus restrictions would have a positive effect on student wellbeing. It was AGREED that the April data would be circulated to CSSU and the SEB as soon as it became available.

FM/CW/Sec

The Chair noted that students living off campus faced a slightly different set of challenges to their wellbeing and sense of community. He noted that the University had made a significant investment in the Dartmouth Avenue site and in extending provision at Lewis House and asked if the Student's Union had any feedback as to whether this availability of services was having a positive effect for students living in the wider community.

Francesco Masala noted that most students did not live in halls and that he would investigate whether the survey data could be broken down to allow for this differentiation.

FM

1264. STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS & REVIEWS 2019/20

The Acting Director of Academic Registry presented a report which provided comment on the operation of Regulation 17, Conduct of Student Academic Appeals and Reviews, during the academic year 2019/20. (Paper CSSU20/21-027).

The Acting Director of Academic Registry noted that although 2019/20 was an exceptional year including both industrial action and the move to online learning and teaching due to COVID-19, the appeal rate remained low, 0.9%, down from 1.3% the previous academic year.

She noted that there was very strong evidence of an association between appeal submissions and the protected characteristics of Ethnicity, Disability and Gender although the data cannot show causation.

The Committee RESOLVED that Appeals data should be shared with the Access and Participation Plan team so that Appeals data could be considered as one element of end to end student lifecycle data analysis. The Chair suggested that appeals data on students with protected characteristics could be compared with Gold Scholars data.

RS

The Committee NOTED the report and RECOMMENDED the report to Senate for noting.

Sec.

1265. CODE OF ETHICS CONSULTATION

The Chair noted that the University's Ethics Committee had circulated a proposal for a review of our Code of Ethics (Paper CSSU20/21-028).

The Committee NOTED the report and the proposed consultation pathway.

1266. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

The Chair noted that the proposed programme of meetings scheduled for 2021/22 will be approved by Senate in April and Council in May:

- Tuesday 2 November 2021 at 2.15pm
- Thursday 2 December 2021 at 2.15pm
- Thursday 17 February 2022 at 2.15pm
- Tuesday 26 April 2022 at 2.15pm

1267. REVISED STANDING ORDERS

The Chair noted that a revised set of Standing Orders for the seven joint Council and Senate Committees was approved by Council and Senate in February.

1268. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair noted that this was the last CSSU meeting of the academic year 2020/21.

He thanked the three Student representatives, Courtney Morgan, George Barnstaple and Kejsi Maluta for their contribution to the Committee.

He thanked Dr Marion Harney who had come to the end of her term of office on the Committee as appointed by Council and noted her important work coordinating the University submission for a Silver Athena Swan award.

He thanked all the SU officers who were finishing this year for their contributions to papers, agendas and discussions and noted that Francesco Masala was finishing his term as President of the Students' Union.

He thanked Professor Peter Lambert who was stepping down from the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching which he had held for the last seven years since July 2015. He noted that Professor Lambert had addressed and responded to many student issues very clearly.

The meeting concluded at 3.35 pm
