



QUEEN'S STUDENTS' UNION

EDUCATION OFFICER REPORT

Jason Bunting



Contact at: su.education@qub.ac.uk / 028 9097 3724 March-April

Outline

A chairde,

At the beginning of this year, we really could not have predicted that March and April would prove a significant challenge to not only this University, but the whole Higher Education sector.

These two months have been extremely trying for all of us and I want to reassure you all that although a lot has changed in the way you are studying and the way we are working, we are still working around the clock, albeit often from our spare rooms, to ensure you are represented and supported.

In this report, I will outline how our lobbying efforts to the University on the educational impact of covid-19 continue to place a recognition of the importance of your ability to continue your academic studies with no disadvantage, at the heart of the University's decision-making process.

I will also outline the progress we have made on the other major priorities of our education agenda.

Key Priorities:

- Covid-19 Response
- Academic Rep Review
- Feedback Team
- Online Learning
- Review of Academic Calendar

Covid-19 Response

Throughout our response to covid-19 as a Students' Union, we have lobbied to ensure the University realises that it is paramount that no students suffer an academic disadvantage as a result of the current crisis.

It is also of critical importance that we ensure that our student reps are properly supported during this period in their efforts to represent their peers.

To that end, we have started a number of measures, including:

- I successfully lobbied for SU representation on the Academic Sub-Group of the Major Incident Team;
- We successfully lobbied to ensure that the Class of 2020 has a graduation in-person ceremony at the next safe opportunity.

- The Student Voice Team and I regularly monitor and respond to issues raised on our Student Ideas Forum, where reps can raise the issues you are facing on a public forum;
- We have established Rep Facebook pages: AHSS Student Voice, MHLS Student Voice and EPS Student Voice;
- We are conducting weekly Teams calls with the Course Reps on our virtual Course Rep Forum to enable us to raise issues and a weekly virtual drop-in time for School Reps as well;
- I am attending any SSCCs and Teams calls with Course Reps to which I am invited;
- I continue to work with Schools to address issues arising as a result of assessments.

We are continuing to work hard on your behalf to ensure that your voice is heard during this period.

Academic Rep Review

In March and April, we completed consultation of our Student Academic Representation Code of Practice.

The Code of Practice guarantees students a seat at the table when decisions are made which affect them. It also offers guiding principles and definitions for student academic representation and it is intended to provide guidance on the rep program to all involved. The code of practice also clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each partner and makes a series of changes.

These are:

- The introduction of Subject Reps, a new tier to the academic representation program where students will represent subjects to ensure School Reps are not over-stretched.
- A new approach to the recruitment of Course Reps. Elections will now only take place for over-subscribed positions, to be determined by Schools and the SU
- A new role in Schools: the Student Rep Co-ordinator (or equivalent)
- A new approach to training, to be co-designed by Schools and the Students' Union and offered on an ongoing basis
- A new system of reward and recognition to be consistent with best practice.
- A new approach to accountability as well as the monitoring and reviewing of the program
- Revisions to the guidance around the twice-semester meetings previously termed SSCCs, to be renamed Student Voice Committees (SVCs).

However, a document alone will not be enough. This month, we agreed on three other recommendations of the Academic Rep Review, which will go forward in a paper for formal University approval in May. You can find details of these recommendations in my report to the Annual Business Meeting of Council.

Feedback Team

Of course, this crisis understandably disrupted the work of our feedback team of Student Partnership Project Interns. However, they nobly adapted their work and have done some incredible work over the last number of weeks that we have been in lockdown.

The team of four interns (Katie, Angela, Sarah and Úna) have been busy working from a distance. They have prepared resources on online learning as well as for our student rep program and have also conducted research into online teaching and learning in the UK and Ireland.

The goal of the feedback team at the beginning of the year was to produce a piece of work on feedback and we are very happy to be able to give you all more sight of what this looks like now.

Feedback is an integral part of the dialogic cycle in the learning process and operates as an essential aspect of the Assessment for Learning (AfL) model of the delivery of education. Your feedback should empower you to improve your performance through the development of your learning style and should ensure that students play an active, informed and participative role in their educational experience (Sambell, 2011).

It has been the subject of much literature that students do not engage with their feedback. However, while this is true for any number of reasons, there is very little support provided to students in the transition to Higher Education to allow them to do so.

The interns are producing a practical tool which will help you engage with feedback. It is our hope to conduct a study next semester on the utility of this feedback tool. We will aim to consider whether this tool may prove useful as an essential part of a student's induction to Queen's.

We are also hoping to lay down the groundwork for a sustainable, accessible, effective model of online learning for semester one.

Review of Academic Calendar

Clearly, in the light of current circumstances, conversations on the academic year calendar now almost exclusively focus on the impact of covid-19.

However, I am very concerned that we will still see the same issues persist next year as a result of the focus on getting through the covid-19 crisis. We have to keep the pressure on the University to tackle bunched deadlines and the other issues which students regularly report through feedback mechanisms relating to the academic year calendar.

As I said earlier in the report, this offers us a practical opportunity to rethink the way we deliver education.

Earlier this year, some members of staff in the University were suggesting that it was impossible to lobby successfully for a change to the calendar. We defied the odds and succeeded. But now, we need to expose the fact that change is more possible than we are often told- just look at how much the delivery of education has changed in the last few months!

Peer Mentoring

We are hoping to use this period to explore how we can expand peer mentoring across the University. After the establishment of the Peer Mentoring Forum this year, we will ensure that this is a network which continues next year and that we properly prepare our students to take up the peer mentoring roles this year.

Other Issues:

- I would like to take the opportunity to formally congratulate your Student Activities Officer Ellen Fearon on her election to NUS-USI President. There is no better person to lead our national movement and I am so excited to see what we can achieve with this incredible woman at the helm.
- Congratulations to An Cumann Gaelach for organising the first ever Féile Mhic Artúir during this period despite the challenges of organising during a period of industrial action. They produced a fantastic festival and hopefully we will see it become a tradition in the years to come!
- Education with a Social Impact: discussions have begun on how we can embed the UN Sustainable Development Goals into our curricula
- The Queen's Partnership Project: progress has stalled as a result of covid-19 as has the work on a National Education Service, but I am hoping to work on both these items in earnest when possible.

Don't hesitate to get in touch with any issues at su.education@qub.ac.uk

Go raibh maith agaibh,

Jason

Meetings/Events

| Meeting/Event | Dates |
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| Biological Sciences School Rep Induction | 1 March |
| Partnership Catch Up with DASA Strategic Support Officer | " |
| Education Committee | " |
| Officer Team Sweep | " |
| Tuition Fee Rally | " |
| Development Weeks Working Group | 2 March |
| Féile New Decade New Approach | " |
| Meeting of 20/21 Team | " |
| Meeting with candidate for Faculty Rep | 4 March |
| Meeting with PVC Education and Students | " |
| Féile Event: Future of Irish Language at Queen's | " |
| IWD Rally 2020 | 7 March |
| UCU Strikes Taking Place 9-13 March | |
| Common Youth- Sex Positivity Workshop | 9 March |
| Academic Board Pre-Meeting | 10 March |
| Meeting with VP Student Activities | 10 March |
| Assessment Task and Finish Group | 19 March |
| UDL Group | 23 March |
| Partnership Intern Sweep | 23 March |
| Student Voice Catch Up | 23 March |
| DLSPIG | 24 March |

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| Fitness to Practise | 24 March |
| Development Weeks Working Group | 25 March |
| Academic Council | “ |
| Call with NUS-USI President | “ |
| Marketing Call | 26 March |
| FTO Accountability | “ |
| Decolonise Catch Up with VP Equality & Diversity | “ |
| SU Awards | “ |
| MIT DEs and Deans of Education | 27 March |
| NBE course Rep Call | “ |
| Supplementary Regs Talk | 31 March |
| Courses and Regulations Group | “ |
| No detriment briefing | 1 April |
| No detriment USI Policy Call | 2 April |
| Assessment Task and Finish Group | “ |
| NBE Course Rep Call | “ |
| School Rep Committee | “ |
| Development Weeks Working Group | 3 April |
| Meeting SU VP Activities | “ |
| MIT DEs and Deans of Education | “ |
| Student Voice Catch Up | “ |
| School Rep Meeting | 6 April |
| Meeting with UUSU VP Education | “ |
| Course Rep Forum | 7 April |
| DASA Catch Up | “ |
| Student Voice Resources Meeting | “ |
| Assessment Task and Finish Group | “ |
| Gaeilge Working Group | “ |
| Student Voice Catch up | 8 April |
| Education Committee Paper Briefing | “ |
| Academic Affairs Working Group | “ |
| All-staff meeting | “ |
| Meeting with NStEP Development Manager | 9 April |
| Meeting with Educational Projects Manager-DASA | “ |
| Meeting with Academic Representation Assistant | “ |
| Academic Sub-Group | “ |
| Meeting with Student Voice | “ |
| NBE UG Course Rep Forum | “ |
| Easter Break: 13- 19 March | |
| Academic Standards QAA | 20 April |
| NUS-USI Weekly Call | “ |
| Resources Meeting | 21 April |
| Student Safety Net Campaign Meeting | “ |
| NUS-USI Conference | 21-22 April |
| Meeting with Director of IS David Robinson | 22 April |
| Biological Sciences Meeting | 23 April |
| Academic Sub Group | “ |
| Student Officers/Student Voice Catch Up | “ |
| EMC | 24 April |

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| Development Weeks Working Group | “ |
| MIT DEs and Deans of Education | “ |
| Private Sector Covid 19 Meeting | “ |
| NUS-USI Meeting | 27 April |
| CED/SST Meeting | 28 April |
| Student Voice Catch Up | “ |
| Intern Sweep | “ |
| Assessment Task and Finish Group | “ |
| Catch Up DASA | “ |
| NUS-USI Weekly Meeting | “ |
| Meeting with Director of Student Plus | “ |
| Intern Meeting | 29 April |
| Covid-19 Meeting | “ |
| Management Board | “ |
| SV & SO catch Up | 30 April |
| Academic Sub-Group | “ |
| QAA Seminar: Student Engagement | “ |
| MIT DEs and Deans of Education Meeting | 1 May |