



ACADEMIC REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MINUTES

Tuesday, 28th February 2019, 17:00 – 18:00
Luton, G101

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Membership in attendance:

Jay Emerson – Chair
Justin Nwajagu, VP Education
Jamie Nelson, VP Equality
11 Academic Representatives (When voting)

Staff in attendance (acting as advisors):

George Cowan – Academic Representation Coordinator
Adam Dembski-Bowden – Student Opportunities Manager

2. ACCEPTING THE AGENDA/DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The meeting was opened by establishing whether the council was at a quorate level or not. At first there were 9 Academic Representatives present, it was decided that the council would take place but without voting rights. Through the course of the meeting two more reps arrived bringing the council to a quorate level. The chair asked all reps present to introduce themselves and state what course their on. The option to discuss the agenda was proposed with the option of adding further points, however, no further points were raised. There was a declaration of interest from the chair due to running in the Beds SU elections.

3. MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the previous meeting had been circulated as a digital copy before the Academic Representative Council took place. The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted. It was again mentioned that although the minutes were emailed ahead of time, that more needs to be done to highlight where they can be found.

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

The Vice President of Equality gave an update on a proposal to adjust the structure of the representation associations to meet as one larger group of students, as opposed to the current meetings which comprise of individual protected characteristics. It is hoped that this creates a more relaxed environment for the students who define in these associations. For any students interested, it was recommended to speak to the Vice President of Equality after the council.

5. REPORTS FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR

The chair delivered a report consisting of several points arising in Union Council, the Vice President of Equality delivered an update on Representational Associations and the Vice President of Education delivered an update on the Digital Rep system. Reps asked how the Digital Rep system could be tied in with other areas of the university, and suggested that the tool is linked through from Breo, Blackboard or QR code to increase traffic. The issue of how to close the feedback loop of the Digital Rep system was raised, as well as what the response time would be from Beds SU.

6. REPORTS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT OF EDUCATION

The VP Education delivered a verbal report based around his priorities for this year in office. The priorities are listed below with an update on the progress of each:

- *‘Ensuring every student has a Personal Academic Tutor they meet with once per term’* – It was stated that this is a work in progress, but that the correct conversations were happening.
- *‘Ensuring at least 50% of course representatives will be adequately trained to fulfil their role’* – It was stated that the 50% target has not yet been achieved, but that one of the methods being put into place to incentivise reps to attend was through buying in hoodies.
- *‘Developing an assignment feedback charter’* – This is currently being discussed and is in progress.
- *‘Developing an internal TEF’* – It was highlighted that this came out of discussions in measuring unit quality. The issues of the current BUS survey were highlighted, and how an updated version of the BUS would be able to yield improvements.

In response to the priorities above, the VP Education took questions from the reps. It was highlighted that university staff members weren’t providing students with much information on the rep role, and therefore were not aware of what they needed to do as a mandatory requirement in their role. It was also mentioned that some Academic Representatives don’t feel as though staff within the institution care for the representation system, and that it takes them too long to pass on the details to Beds SU.

Academic Representatives also discussed the PATs system. Issues arising included PATs not making themselves known to students, that the process for students to find out who their PAT is a long winded journey through Evision, and that some students went through three years of uni without meeting their PAT. One rep mentioned that their PAT was excellent mainly due to an introduction at the start of their university career, they had been to meetings with their PAT and know exactly what they can do. It was mentioned that more information of PATs should be included in induction week.



7. MEET THE CANDIDATES

As part of this council it was previously arranged to invite all of the 2019 candidates for the VP Education role. In order to conduct this in a fair and transparent manner, the chair was passed over to a Beds SU staff member to take a lead on facilitation. To start this section each candidate was invited to deliver a speech:

- Candidate 1 delivered a speech on what they have done during their time at university in regards to the student voice, what they want to deliver with the role as well as how they can fix some of the issues that had been raised in the council. They stated that they wanted students to inform their remit, rather than telling students what they wanted.
- Candidate 2 delivered a speech on their experience from their time at university, how they had been involved in cross-department working with other course, and finally discussed issues that they would be trying to address in their time as VP Education.
- Candidate 3 delivered a speech detailing some of the issues that they have discovered during their time at university and which issues they would try to deal with during their time as VP Education.

Following the speeches it was passed to the floor to ask questions to the candidates. The following questions we're delivered for the candidates to respond to:

- 1) 'In line with recent discussions about the black attainment gap, what are your views on it as a social construct vs it as an example of institutional and systemic racism?'
- 2) 'After discussing a lack of engagement from students with Beds SU tools and services, what is your plan to counteract this?'
- 3) 'How do you intend to tackle the way in which Academic Representatives engage with the Students' Union?'
- 4) 'The Alexon building feels very much separate from the main Luton campus, what would you do to encourage students to come over and take part?'
- 5) 'As candidates you all have a manifesto, how would you balance your manifesto points with students that walk in?'



8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was asked whether Beds SU can engage students at the start of the year rather than waiting for the university. It was raised that there should be a standalone stall at Freshers Week to promote the Academic Representative system. **Action: Beds SU staff to look into this at ARSG.**

The issue of book orders using the My Beds card taking around 6 weeks was raised. This was an issue due to the fact that the unit for which the books were ordered was nearly over. This issue has also been logged on the Digital Rep system. **Action: Justin Nwajagu offered to escalate.**

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date and time of the next meeting will be the 27th of March at 15:00pm.