UNIVERSITY OF YORK

STUDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Student Services Committee held on 16 June 2011.

Present:

Dr R Aitken (Academic staff member)
Ms L Borisovaite (SU Welfare Officer)
Mr J Calhoun (GSA President)
Mrs K Dodd (Academic Registrar)
Ms S Ford (Academic staff member)
Mr J Greenwood (Director Commercial Services)
Dr J Grenville Pro-Vice Chancellor (Chair)
Ms S Johnston (Head of Campus Services)
Dr N Lunt (Provost)
Mr T Ngwena (SU President)
Mr S Page (Director Student Support Services)
Dr E Sheen (Academic staff member)
Mrs L Wild (Lay member)

In Attendance:

Mrs J P Ellis (Committee Secretary)
Ms K Fearon (Web Coordinator)
Ms E Harbord (Assistant Director of Information (Services))
Ms L Johnston (University Health Centre)
Dr J Lethem (University Health Centre)
Ms A Sherratt (Internal Communications Officer)
Dr A Wilcox (Senior Adviser, PVC’s Office, University of Hull)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Dr D Duncan (Registrar and Secretary)
Mr D Mariano (GSA Welfare Officer)
Mr J Meacock (Director Estates and Campus Services)
Mrs B Scott (Lay Member)
CATEGORY I BUSINESS

10-11/36 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were noted.

10-11/37 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2011 were approved.

Matters arising from the minutes

Matters arising from the minutes (Category II business) were noted.

10-11/38 Student Services Committee Governance

The background to Dr Amanda Wilcox’s work, and the increasing focus on the student experience agenda as a result of increased tuition fees, were explained to the Committee. Explicit comparisons were likely to be made regarding the range of services that contributed to the experience of students and their parents.

There were, therefore, a number of questions for the university to consider and decisions to be made in determining what should constitute the student experience at the University of York; the ways in which those services contributing to the student experience were managed; where responsibilities lay and recognising how decisions that fell between governance and local management could be blurred and how to approach such situations. The importance of aligning the university’s view of student experience with students’ expectations and of managing those expectations was emphasised.

It was noted that the review of Senate effectiveness was currently taking place within the university and that the recommendation had been made for Student Services Committee to report to the Policy and Resources Committee rather than Senate.

Members of the Committee were invited to comment and agreed that this was an appropriate shift of focus.

It was noted that the PVC Students now attended meetings of the Planning Committee, which was a sub-committee of Council, and felt that this was a reflection of the increased focus on student experience. Dr Wilcox was invited to attend the November meeting of the Committee in order to present her findings. She was thanked for the work that she had undertaken.
The Health Centre Annual report was received. Dr Lethem highlighted a number of issues and the Health Centre’s commitment to students and the student experience was emphasised. A number of changed in staff were noted and attention was drawn to ways in which the Health Centre was now working, particularly its dynamic and proactive response to feedback. Improved communication was also stressed, with the introduction of Confirmation of Illness forms and closer working with the Open Door Team. It was noted that uncertainties remain regarding the commissioning of services and that these added to the challenges faced by the Health Centre.

Discussion took place around developments in the Sports Centre, with consideration currently being given to offer a physiotherapy service and whether it was viable to provide a dispensing service to students. Recent attempts to set up a dispensing chemist outlet on campus had failed: although a license had been obtained, pharmacists did not feel that there was sufficient business to take up the premises. It was confirmed that the Health Centre was not at present considering becoming a dispensing practice owing to limitations in space and expertise but that Dr Lethem would be happy to engage in discussion with Mr J Greenwood regarding this. It was acknowledged that this was a matter that was important to students and it was agreed that Mr J Greenwood and Ms S Johnston would meet to discuss this and report their findings to the Chair (as a matter for Chair’s action).

Dr Lethem was thanked for presenting the report on behalf of the Health Centre and also for his contribution.

Item brought forward.

The Committee received a progress report from Ms A Sherratt and Ms K Fearon. Ms Sherratt explained the background to the work and reported that 2500 students had responded to the questionnaire that had been circulated. She reported that the focus was now on what could be done as soon as possible to make a difference to the student experience and then to implement incremental changes. A number of improvements had been identified for implementation in October, including changes to the student home page, improving search results and navigation and the introduction of personalised links for individuals.
In discussion it was recognised that there were significant resource issues, both financially and in relation to capacity but that the results promised to be excellent. It was acknowledged that making incremental improvements was the preferred option. Discussion took place regarding the relationship between departments and aspects of communication protocol particularly in the event of students increasingly using mobile devices rather than supported computers to communicate. It was agreed that this was a matter that would be monitored over the coming year.

Ms A Sherratt and Ms K Fearon were thanked for their presentation.

10-11/40 Future of the Student Support Forum

It was reported that members of the Student Support Forum had been consulted about its future. Ten responses had been received, three of which were in support of continuing and seven in support of disbanding. As a result it was proposed that the Student Support Forum should be disbanded.

Concern was expressed about the Chaplains and the GSA and YUSU staff members. It was proposed that the PVC Students would hold termly meetings with these staff should the proposal to disband the Student Support Forum be approved.

The proposal to disband the Student Support Forum was approved.

10-11/41 Format of Annual Reports

The Committee received a draft template for service area annual reports from the Academic Registrar. Following discussion it was agreed that the service improvement plans that would constitute part of the annual report should be brought to this committee for approval and subsequent monitoring. The matter of improvement plans and service area reports from areas which have not previously reported to SSC was raised. It was noted that there were areas within Campus Services, Commercial Services, Estates, and the Information Directorate to which this applied.

It was agreed that the PVC Students would discuss the matter, and the distinction between reporting lines, with the PVC Estates.

Action: PVC Students

Discussion took place around customer feedback and evidence based evaluation. It was agreed that the wording should be amended to incorporate
other performance measures which would enable evidence based evaluation to be captured.

**Action:** Academic Registrar

It was noted that although different reporting lines and measures existed, and that the Health Centre was a separate legal entity, it would be useful if the Health Centre annual report could link into this reporting line and use similar measures wherever possible.

It was agreed that a template would be drawn up and in place for the beginning of the new academic year.

**Action:** Academic Registrar and PVC Students

**10-11/42 Review of Pastoral Support for postgraduate Masters students**

The Committee received a paper from Mr Russell Yates on progress to date. It was noted that some details of the membership were inaccurate. It was agreed that the details would be checked and corrected.

**Action:** Secretary

It was agreed that Mr Yates would be asked to report the group’s findings to the November meeting of Student Services Committee.

**Action:** Secretary

**10-11/48 Catering Focus Group**

Item brought forward

The Committee received a verbal report from the Chair of the Catering Focus Group. It was reported that the group continued to evolve and that its meeting earlier in the day had focussed on post graduate and international students. Fifteen students had attended and a useful discussion had taken place resulting in a number of measures. Plans were in place to discuss one topic at each meeting and the group was open to suggestions for themes for discussion.

It was noted that the group would provide a useful forum in keeping the catered college package and students’ response to it under review.

**10-11/44 Faith Group Facilities and Faith Contacts**

The Committee received a progress report from the Director Student Support Services.
Following discussion it was agreed that the PVC would continue to convene the annual faith meeting. It was agreed that the role being undertaken by a member of the university Senior Management Group provided a positive message. It was confirmed that operational matters would remain with Student Support Services. It was agreed that the PVC Students would provide a (hot) meal at the event and that she and the Director Student Support Services would agree a date and attend the event.

**Action: PVC Students and Director Student Support Services**

Discussion took place around the requirement for a code of practice for use of premises.

Concern was expressed regarding faith contacts who, on occasion, booked other rooms on campus. It was noted that there was some information in the recently published Prevent Strategy which should be applied to situations such as this.

It was agreed that the Director Student Support Services and the Head of Campus Services would meet to discuss this matter and draw up a code of conduct and terms and conditions of use that may be appropriate.

**Action: Director Student Support Services and Head of Campus Services.**

Following discussion it was agreed that the applicant portal was the best place for students to indicate that they wished to receive further information about faith/religious provision available to them whilst at university.

Following discussion it was agreed that the prayer rooms in Wentworth and the Ron Cooke Hub should be formally designated as multi faith facilities.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Quiet Place Group should be replaced by a Faith Practice Group.

**10-11/45 University policy for the payment of psychological testing**

The Committee received a paper from the Director Student Support Services reviewing the university policy, agreed in June 2010, for the payment of psychological testing for students. He advised the Committee that the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) had now been received for the academic year 2011-12 and that it was due to increase by approximately 10%.
Following discussion the policy for 2011-12 was proposed:
  • To award 100% of the psychological assessment costs for those students whose household income was below £25,000. No further assessment process would be required.
  • That Disability Services and the Student Financial Support Unit monitor on a monthly basis all students who have been advised to undertake a psychological test and who have not booked a test or applied for financial assistance for the costs.
  • To continue to explore ways of achieving full funding of all psychological assessments in future years without unduly depleting hardship funds for other hardship, possibly requesting a specific budget allocation to enable this to happen.

The Director Student Services advised the Committee that a proposal to establish an additional hardship fund had been incorporated in to the University’s Access Agreement but that this was likely to take some years to build up.

The proposal was approved.

10-11/46 Plans for student accommodation

The Committee received an accommodation update for 2011-12 from the Accommodation Services Manager.

The Head of Campus Services advised the Committee that it was currently too early in the admission cycle to know the accurate situation regarding accommodation. It was reported that a contingency plan had been put in place following last year’s experience.

It was agreed that the Head of Campus Services would continue to liaise closely with the PVC Students to keep her informed regarding developments.

10-11/47 Post Graduate Forum

The Committee received a verbal report from the President of the Graduate Student Association (GSA). It was reported that two fora had taken place during the year. The first, in November, was attended by approximately sixty students and that the issues raised had related mainly to housing and accommodation and the information available to students on their arrival. The second, in March, was attended by fewer than ten students and the issues raised were more varied and of less serious concern.
The GSA was looking into the reasons for the reduction in numbers for the second event. It was noted that enquiries and concerns reported to the GSA continued at the same level. A third forum had been planned for the Summer term but had been cancelled. Two were planned for 2011-12. Plans were in place for attendance to be monitored and reviewed.

The Chair thanked representatives of the GSA and YUSU for their contributions to the Committee.

**CATEGORY II BUSINESS**

**10-11/49**  
**Matters arising from the meeting held on 24 February 2011.**

a) **Student Services Committee Away Day** (M10-11/22 refers)

It was reported that the role of governance in relation to Student Services Committee had been included as an agenda item for this meeting.

It was reported that the nature and format of service area annual reports had been included as an agenda item for this meeting.

b) **Sub groups of Student Services Committee** (M10-11/26 refers)

It was reported that consideration to phasing out the Student Support Forum from the end of the academic year had been included as an agenda item for this meeting.

c) **Internationalisation Strategy** (M10-11/26 refers)

It was reported that a sub group, chaired by Ms Hilary Layton, had been set up to consider the factors that ensured successful student events, those that did not, and the reasons why. The group would report to the Committee in November 2011.

It was reported that the SU President had held discussions with home students to ascertain their views.

d) **Plans for student accommodation** (M10-11/27 refers)

It was reported that the PVC Students had established the estimated number of students entering the University through Clearing as 205.
e) Communication Strategy for Students (M10-11/10 refers)

It was reported that Ms A Sherratt had provided a progress report to this meeting.

10-11/50 Sports Centre Annual Report

The Sports Centre Annual report was received.

Enclosure SSC.10-11/38

Date of next meeting.

To note that the dates for the meetings for 2011-12 are:
Thursday 17 November 2011
Thursday 23 February 2012
Thursday 14 June 2012

All will take place at 2.15pm in Room H/G 15 Heslington Hall.

Jill P Ellis
JPE/June 2011.