



## The Department of Health Sciences

### STUDENT-STAFF FORUM (UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES)

Minutes of the meeting held at 15.00 on Wednesday 3 February 2021

**Present:**

Student Representatives

Poppy Bonsall (UG Departmental Rep)  
Sinead Campbell (BSc Nursing Sept19)  
Claudia Collins (BSc Nursing Sept20)  
Chelsea Fawcett (BSc Nursing Sept18)  
Georgina Lucas (BSc Nursing Sept18)  
Mollie Smith (BA Midwifery Practice Mid18)

Departmental Representatives

Anita Savage Grainge (Chair, Board of Studies)  
Katie Pybus (Deputy Chair, Athena SWAN Working Group)  
Danielle Simpson (Student Support & Engagement Manager)

**In attendance:** Veronica Gillies (Secretary)

**SSF/Feb21/01 Apologies for Absence**

Rose Havelock, Russell Yates, Lauren Bardett (Mid20), Sophia Collins-Ricketts (MNursing Sept19), Rosina Crowley-Whitehead (BSc Nursing Sept20), Eve Hankin (Mid19), Sophie McDonnell (Mid19), Bethany McLaine (MNursing Sept17)

**SSF/Feb21/02 Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes from the meeting of the UG Student-Staff Forum which took place on 8 October 2020 were **approved**.

**SSF/Feb21/03 Matters Arising**

**SSF/Oct20/04.02 Communication Methods: Alternatives to Email**

Members were reminded that there had been an action for DS to explore the use of Departmental social media accounts to disseminate information to students, as an alternative to email. DS reported that she and Jane Milsom (DoHS Project Coordinator) had discussed using social media but had agreed that this was not the best way to disseminate information. DS advised that a monthly newsletter was being introduced which would include non-urgent information updates, news about events and signposting to other sources of information. Initially the newsletter would be focused on nursing programmes, although it was anticipated that if the newsletter proved successful then either midwifery-related information would be included or an equivalent would be produced specifically for midwifery students.

CF noted that Student Reps for nursing had been asked to provide a photo and contact details to be included in the newsletter, to help students to get to know them. CF added that Reps seemed to be receiving an increased number of queries which should be directed to personal supervisors or the programme team, indicating that students were

unsure who to go to for help. DS requested that Reps notify her of any recurring issues so that information on these could be added to the newsletter.

### **SSF/Oct20/07 Chairperson Arrangements**

It was noted that there had been an action for ASG to contact PB (UG Dept Rep) regarding chairing future UG SSF meetings. ASG explained that historically chairing of meetings had been shared between herself as Chair BoS and the UG Departmental Rep. Accordingly it had been agreed that PB would chair the next meeting.

### **SSF/Oct20/08.01 Student Rep Training & Induction**

Members were reminded that there had been an action for ASG and DS to organise a Department-specific induction session for new Student Reps. It was reported that this had not yet been done, and that suggestions for useful content would be welcomed. DS advised that currently it was anticipated that the session would include information on: the SASS team; Student Engagement and Student-Staff Forum meetings; the Student Rep VLE site; and broadly what Reps were expected to engage with in the Department.

It was suggested that information on Departmental support roles would be helpful, to assist Reps in signposting students to the correct person. This could take the form of a summary of the roles of personal supervisors, Programme Leaders, Committee/Board Chairs and others, and the kinds of queries that might be directed to each. In addition, it was suggested that an overview of the different meetings to which Reps were invited would be useful, including information on what the meeting was for and who would be expected to be present.

It was agreed that DS and ASG would start to develop the requested resources, to share with Reps for feedback.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>BY WHOM</b>
To develop resource for Student Reps on Departmental roles and responsibilities, and Departmental meetings	Danielle Simpson & Anita Savage Grainge

### **SSF/Feb21/04**

#### **Athena SWAN**

KP explained that Athena SWAN was a national award scheme focusing on gender equality in universities, and promoting equal working practices. The group was informed that currently the Department held a Bronze award, which recognised its commitment to challenging gender inequality. Silver and Gold awards were also available, with each level requiring demonstration of greater levels of action to promote equality. In terms of staff concerns, the Athena SWAN Working Group considered issues such as promotions, the gender pay gap, and flexible working practices. The Working Group had run well-being surveys during the pandemic, and examined the results for possible gender-related issues arising from home-working. KP noted that the gender balance in the Department was predominantly female, both in staff and student groups, and therefore the Working Group also considered ways to support male colleagues and students: for example, addressing the proportionally lower number of male applicants to undergraduate programmes.

KP advised that the Working Group was keen to improve its engagement with students, and was therefore working with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee to organise student focus groups. The Working Group was also planning to conduct a survey, and KP invited feedback from Reps on how best to disseminate this to maximise the response rate. It was suggested that information about the survey could be added to the next newsletter, though it was acknowledged that this would only reach nursing students. MS reported that the Mid18 midwifery cohort had a group chat, and offered to post a link to the survey on there. It was noted that students received a lot of requests to complete surveys or provide feedback, and that any incentives for doing so – such as freebies or prize draws – tended to encourage more students to respond. There was also discussion

of introducing ‘champions’ for specific issues within student groups, as a separate role from Student Reps. Reps agreed that it could be helpful to have an individual to act as the point of contact for one specific issue. It was recognised, however, that this would be a structural change which would require further exploration before being implemented. KP thanked Reps for their input. It was agreed that the specific suggestions for disseminating the survey would be followed up outside the meeting.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>BY WHOM</b>
To follow up suggestions for ways of disseminating Athena SWAN student survey	Katie Pybus

**SSF/Feb21/05**

***Standing Item: Student & Academic Support Service Update***

DS reminded Reps that the SASS team continued to be available by email or on the phone for support. The SASS office was also open so students who were on campus, for example for mandatory training sessions, were able to call in.

**SSF/Feb21/04.01 Student Community Coordinators**

Reps were advised that the University was recruiting Student Community Coordinators, a paid role with a focus on developing student communities within Departments. The role would involve promoting activities and events aimed at bringing students together. The initiative was intended to combat the loneliness and isolation which the University was aware many students were feeling as a result of lockdown.

**SSF/Feb21/04.02 Well-being Officers**

The group was informed that the Department now had access to a new team of Well-being Officers, who were able to support students with the kind of concerns that were previously managed by DS or Matthew Jacobs (Head of Student & Academic Support Services). It was stressed, however, that students were not able to self-refer to the Well-being Officers, and instead should speak to either their personal supervisor or DS, who would be able to refer them.

DS reported that the Well-being Officers were organising sessions for third- and fourth-year nursing students who were due to go out into practice shortly, aimed at addressing anxieties around this. Future sessions were also planned for other year groups, with details to be included in the student newsletter as they were confirmed.

**SSF/Feb21/06**

***Standing Item: Undergraduate Programme Issues***

**SSF/Feb21/06.01 Paid Placements (Sept18)**

CF reported that there seemed to be confusion among practice partners and students about the arrangements for paid placements, and specifically a concern that practice colleagues would be expected to train students up to work as Support Workers. ASG advised Reps to forward any queries on this topic to the Practice Learning Link (PLL) team ([dohs-pll@york.ac.uk](mailto:dohs-pll@york.ac.uk)), who would be best placed to respond to ensure consistent messaging.

PB added that students in Child field of practice especially were concerned that they would be redeployed to different practice areas, but that she had referred them to the PLL team. It was noted that queries relating to a particular field of practice could also be referred to the Field of Practice Lead.

**SSF/Feb21/06.02 Timing of Release of Results (Sept18)**

GL reported that the cohort had fed back that not having a set time for the release of assessment results was causing significant anxiety. ASG explained that results were released by the Student Assessment Office on the day stipulated on the assessment schedule: and that students would be notified as early as possible if this was not going to happen. GL explained that students would find it helpful to know what time on that day

the results would be released, as they found it stressful that it could be any time between 8.00am and 4.30pm. It was suggested that the Student Assessment Office could put a notification on the VLE the day before results were due out, giving an indication of what time this would happen. Reps agreed that students would find this helpful. ASG undertook to follow this up with the Student Assessment Office.

ACTION	BY WHOM
To follow up request for early notification of results release time with Student Assessment Office	Anita Savage Grainge

#### **SSF/Feb21/06.03 NMC Birth Numbers & Emergency Standards (Mid18)**

MS reported that students had heard that the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) was reducing the number of births required for qualification as a midwife, but that it was not known whether this was true. It was suggested that the query should be referred to the Midwifery programme team, who would be able to advise.

MS also enquired what the University position was on the NMC decision that the Emergency Standards would not apply to midwifery programmes this time round. ASG acknowledged that midwifery students may feel frustrated and disappointed at this decision, but explained that the University had to abide by the decisions of the NMC as a regulatory body.

#### **SSF/Feb21/06.04 Student Survey Feedback (Sept20)**

CC shared the summary results of a survey conducted with the Sept20 cohort, to which 49 students responded. The following key points were noted:

- About three-quarters of respondents responded positively to the question ‘how are you doing?’, indicating that generally the cohort was coping with the current situation.
- Responses were mixed in relation to course satisfaction and whether the course met students’ expectations.
- Over half of respondents reported that they did not feel supported by academic staff.
- The most popular suggestions for improving academic support were provision of recorded lectures and provision of additional drop-in sessions.
- Over half of respondents reported that they did feel supported by student support services (Departmental and University-wide), with the majority of remaining respondents indicating that they did not require support. Only 10% of respondents answered this question negatively.
- Respondents who did not feel supported by student support services indicated that they were unsure where to go for help.
- Nearly half of respondents indicated that they understood why it was not possible for the cohort to go into practice currently and were satisfied with the reasons; a further 39% understood the reasons for this but were frustrated by it. A relatively small proportion of respondents (n=11) indicated that they did not understand the reasons for not being able to go into practice at the current time.
- Free-text comments raised concerns about a ‘feedback loop’ regarding seminar questions, with seminar leads advising students to use the VLE discussion board for these, and the VLE discussion board advising students to ask their seminar leads.
- Respondents were divided in their views over the VLE discussion board.

ASG thanked CC for organising the survey and sharing the responses. It was agreed that the feedback would be shared at the next Stage 1 Leads meeting, for consideration of how best to address the concerns raised. It was also agreed that the feedback would be shared with DS for consideration of the student support elements.

SC noted that the Sept19 Reps had a monthly meeting with the Stage 2 Nursing Leads, and that this was helpful for resolving issues as they arose.

- SSF/Feb21/07**     **Standing Item: Board of Studies – Reporting Arrangements**  
There were no issues requiring escalation to Board of Studies.
- SSF/Feb21/08**     **Standing Item: Chairperson Arrangements – next Student-Staff Forum**  
It was confirmed that Poppy Bonsall (UG Dept Rep) would chair the next meeting.
- SSF/Feb21/09**     **Any Other Urgent Business**  
None.
- SSF/Feb21/10**     **Date and Time of Next Meeting**  
Wednesday 2 June 2021, 12.00-13.00

## SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

<b>AGENDA ITEM AND TITLE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>BY WHOM</b>
SSF/Oct20/08.01 Student Rep Training & Induction	To develop resource for Student Reps on Departmental roles and responsibilities, and Departmental meetings	Danielle Simpson & Anita Savage Grainge
SSF/Feb21/04 Athena SWAN	To follow up suggestions for ways of disseminating Athena SWAN student survey	Katie Pybus
SSF/Feb21/06.02 Timing of Release of Results (Sept18)	To follow up request for early notification of results release time with Student Assessment Office	Anita Savage Grainge