

UNIVERSITY OF YORK
Senate and Council
STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE

Matters for note arising from the meeting of Student Life Committee held on 28 January 2021

1. Membership:

- The Committee noted that, following discussion with the Chief Operating Officer, confirmation of Dr Campbell as co-Chair of the Committee (as opposed to Acting Co-Chair) had been recommended to Council and Senate. Council and Senate have now approved confirmation of the appointment (meetings held on 25 January 2021 and 2 February 2021 respectively).
- The Committee welcomed Dr Dawn Wood, Director of Online Programmes in Computer Science, who has been appointed to the Committee as an academic representative via Chair's action on behalf of Senate, following consultation with the Faculty Deans.
- The Committee further noted that Brian Terry, formerly YUSU Student Activities Officer, had moved on to a new role outside YUSU.

2. Updates on recent activity:

- The Committee received updates from the Co-Chairs relating to students returning to York (resident on campus and in the city); Covid-19 testing for staff and students; the state of play regarding student accommodation rent credit; and YUSU activity regarding the University's package of assessment mitigation measures, how this is informed by the Russell Group's position, and protection of student incomes.
- The Committee received further updates from Professional Services regarding support for students, including the latest round of the Emergency Student Support Fund. The Committee noted that it was necessary to ensure that processes were in place to refer any students referencing mental health concerns in their applications onwards for further support. Consideration was also being given to the future of the fund, including how to prioritise students in most need of support.
- The Committee further noted the outline response to Covid-19 for the Spring Term, summarising the work of the Student Life and Opportunities Contingency Group (SLOGG) to support students during the Spring Term under lockdown, in four key areas: financial support, including help with equipment and internet connectivity; welfare and wellbeing; building academic and student communities in departments; and community, including YUSU-led student volunteering projects in the city.
- Regarding Careers and Placements, the Committee endorsed a proposal that York Strengths Development Days should be run in the autumn term 2021 for Years 2 and 3 (who would previously have missed out), rather than adopting a hybrid approach in the summer term 2021.
- The Committee noted the need for further discussion of induction provision and support opportunities available to distance learning students and agreed measures to take this forward.

3. Report and Support:

- The Committee received a paper on misconduct reporting rates via Report and Support, including reported misconduct relating to Covid-19. It noted that reporting had increased across all areas of categorisation in comparison with previous years, although this indicated better reporting mechanisms rather than a cause for concern. The University had supported a proposal to re-prioritise resources for this area in order to support the workload associated with increased reporting.
- The Committee noted that levels of anonymous reporting at York indicated good levels of trust compared with the sector. Data was being gathered from the current term onwards regarding the factors underlying anonymous reporting.

- Assessment of the system's success would be undertaken once data was available from the second year of operation, and feedback would also be gathered from those who had been through the complaints process.
4. The Committee received and commended a summary of student support during a year of Covid, noting that the University was leading the sector in this area. The document demonstrated successful collaboration between the students' unions, academic departments, professional services and colleges during the Covid-19 pandemic, and illustrated the sense of 'shared purpose' as articulated in the draft University Strategy.
 5. The Committee received a progress report from the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Task & Finish Group, noting that the new Strategy would come to the Committee for consideration in due course.
 6. The Committee considered Annual Reports for 2019/20 from the York Campus Nursery and from the Volunteering and Community Committee, and endorsed the proposed priorities for volunteering activity in 2020/21.
 7. The Committee received a presentation on the International Student Barometer survey outcomes from 2019/20, noting areas of strength and areas for improvement, with reference to comparator institutions. Overall, services with higher levels of use demonstrated higher levels of satisfaction.

Given the time lag on the data, the Committee advised that departments and professional services should review the detail, with support from International Recruitment and BIU, where this was of use to current planning, with a focus on quick wins. It was important to understand the relationship between these findings and other sources of student insight such as the Pulse Survey.

The Committee noted that the ISB survey was currently running for 2020/21, closing on 24 February, and had been adapted to take account of changes related to Covid-19, including whether or not students were located on campus, and additional support measures which had been introduced by the University. An analysis of the findings would be presented to the Committee once available.

8. The Committee considered a summary of results from Autumn Term Pulse Surveys. It noted the key finding that wellbeing and support was a matter of fostering community as well as addressing student mental health and wellbeing, and that this had prompted the project led by the Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students (Social Sciences) to help build communities within departments. Further thought would be given to disseminating the findings of the analysis to departments and Faculties.

The Committee discussed the respective burden on students in different academic years and different modes of study, and noted good practice regarding departmental check-ins. It noted the importance of embedding support within departments and in particular the partnership between the Open Door team and supervisors. It agreed that further discussion would take place between the Open Door team and the departmental communities project leaders, reporting back to the Committee's next meeting.

Dr Wayne Campbell and Patrick O'Donnell, Co-Chairs of Student Life Committee
24 February 2021