

UNIVERSITY OF YORK
Senate and Council
STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE

Matters for note arising from the meeting of Student Life Committee held on 15 April 2021

1. The Committee received updates in relation to the following:
 - (a) Progress with development of the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2020/21–2024/25, including an implementation plan. Feedback and endorsement would be sought from the Student Mental Health Forum, and from UEB and SLC, prior to submission to Senate and Council for approval in July.
 - (b) Arrangements for graduation and small scale departmental celebrations.
 - (c) The Committee noted that the government’s last-minute announcement regarding a return to in-person teaching for all students no earlier than 17 May had been very disappointing. It was anticipated that students would return to campus for the summer term; around 2,000 were currently in residence.
 - (d) A Spring Term report from the Student Life and Opportunities Contingency Group (SLOCG), including details of partnership working between professional services, academic departments and the students’ unions; and further reports from Professional Services on recent activities.
 - (e) Updates on recent developments from YUSU and from the GSA.
 - (f) Summaries of recent business from Student Life Operations Group and the Student Mental Health Forum.
2. The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Estates Development on outdoor multifunctional teaching and social spaces. It noted that the Piazza Marquee was available for use from 19 April, and that four further permanent fixtures, distributed across Campus West and East, would be available for use at the end of May. The Committee noted that further investment would depend on usage of and demand for the existing spaces. The Committee observed that, given that most teaching would have been completed by the end of May, it was important that usage was not assessed solely on the basis of the coming term.
3. The Committee considered a report from Conduct and Respect, including Spring Term data on Report and Support and an Action Plan on dealing with sexual violence and student misconduct. It noted the following:
 - (a) Developments in relation to online and face to face training provision for staff and students. The Committee observed that serious consideration should be given to whether Consent Matters training should be made mandatory for students, and whether it should be undertaken on an annual basis. There was a need to give the module further prominence within the University’s VLE.
 - (b) Establishment of a formal Sexual Violence Steering Group had been agreed with the Chief Operating Officer.
 - (c) Additional resources had been agreed for the Conduct and Respect team for the next 12 months in recognition of an increasing volume of activity, including referrals to Support to Study.
 - (d) Further amendments to Regulation 7 were under preparation for approval by Senate in July, based on the first year of use, and with the aim of exploring the removal of academic misconduct from the Regulation’s scope. An overhaul of the presentation of Regulation 7 on the University website to ensure accessibility was due to go live in the Summer Term.
 - (e) Following the soft launch of Report and Support in the Summer Term 2020, communication and promotion of this tool had significantly increased. Data on reporting rates indicated a positive response to the awareness raising campaign, although there was still further work to be done.
 - (f) A new question added to Report and Support on why respondents chose to report anonymously would help the Conduct and Respect team to better understand barriers to reporting. There was scope for clearer messaging on the limitations of anonymous reporting.
 - (g) Informal feedback indicated that students had found the support provided by the two Sexual Violence Liaison Officers (SVLOs) very helpful.
The Committee welcomed the progress that had been made and commended the team’s collaborative approach with students.
4. The Committee considered a report from The Last Taboo project, undertaken by two York students to investigate sexual assault and harassment at the University. It noted that the project aimed to capture the student perspective in order to inform the University’s provision, and to facilitate an ongoing conversation between staff and students. The report put forward 51 recommendations for consideration, arising from

engagement with staff and students. The Committee recognised that the student sample size was relatively small; however, the report's recommendations were still highly relevant.

The Committee welcomed the report and noted the following:

- (a) As set out in the update from Conduct and Respect, some of the recommendations had already been completed or were in hand (e.g. presentation of Regulation 7 in a more student-friendly way).
- (b) The Committee endorsed the production of leaflets with details of reporting processes and sources of advice, and the need for consistent signposting of Report and Support for all student year groups.
- (c) The report commended the University's appointment of two full-time SVLOs as sector-leading practice and recommended that the team should be expanded to include more demographic specialists, especially LGBTQ+ and BAME. The Committee recognised the importance of developing the SVLO team and noted that additional resource implications would need to be considered via the University's planning processes.

The Committee decided that the Conduct and Respect team, led by the Director of Student Life and Wellbeing, should consider the Report's recommendations in detail and agree an action plan in response. The Head of Equality and Diversity would contact the Report's authors regarding circulating the report to other University groups for information.

5. The Committee received Annual Reports from YUSU and the GSA, and from Catering and Hospitality. With regard to the latter, the Committee thanked the Catering and Hospitality team for its excellent work in support of students. The experience of the past year had fostered more collaborative working between Catering and Hospitality, the Colleges and YUSU, and it was important to retain this approach post the pandemic.
6. Student Pulse Survey findings for the Spring Term 2021. The Committee noted the following:
 - (a) The findings had been fed onwards to SLOCG and to departments as relevant. The Survey would continue through the Summer Term, and it was under consideration whether to take the Survey forward into the next academic year, including how it might be made more responsive and useful.
 - (b) The Committee noted in particular the data regarding hours spent studying, which indicated that students at each end of the spectrum were reporting unhappiness. A number of ways to address this were suggested, including: addressing workload and wellbeing through programme design; communicating expectations clearly to students; the role to be played by supervisors; and provision and promotion of non-academic activities for balance. The Committee agreed to share the report and the minute of its discussion with University Teaching Committee, with particular reference to this issue.
7. Apprenticeship programmes and student life:
 - (a) The Committee received an update on progress with putting additional measures in place to support apprenticeship learners. Provision included a particular focus on safeguarding and Prevent, as well as broader student support and wellbeing initiatives tailored to learners on apprenticeships and work-based programmes.
 - (b) The Committee approved the Apprenticeships Safeguarding Policy, noting that the latter met Ofsted requirements. These requirements included the need to include prescribed 'British Values' in the induction and safeguarding information and in the teaching and learning for the programmes. The Committee further noted that these 'British Values' were introduced in the context of the Professional Values for Nursing Associates, and the University's Together York Community Declaration and Equality and Diversity policies.
8. The Co-Chair (Academic Registrar) reported on progress with resolving academic-related issues arising from the supporting guidance to the Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy. Changes to the guidance had been agreed between the Chairs of Student Life Committee, Special Cases Committee and the Standing Committee on Assessment and a GSA representative, and once finalised would be circulated to the Committee for comment and endorsement, prior to formal approval by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in June.