

University of York
Student Life Committee

Matters for note arising from the meeting of Student Life Committee, 8 February 2024

1. The Committee considered the following reports:
 - a. An annual report from the Campus Nursery for the year 2022 - 2023. The Committee commended work in this area, particularly the opening of the new Nursery and the excellent feedback it had received. It was noted that PGR students were not currently eligible for the subsidised fee rates and entitlements available to other students: the Committee asked DTEF to examine whether such subsidies could be extended to PGR students. The Committee endorsed the Nursery's future plans.
 - b. An annual report on student sustainable transport and initiatives. The Committee asked DTEF to follow up issues around the availability of accessible parking; public transport outside of semester time; and the storage and charging of e-bikes.
 - c. An annual report on Support to Study, which summarised its work in 2022/23 and noted a growth in cases and successful outcomes. The impact of the Check-In system on the process is not yet clear. The Support to Study Procedure is reliant on support from staff across a variety of areas to run in both the roles specific to Support to Study and staff attending to represent different areas of the university. The Committee noted concerns around the sustainability of the model and work to grow the staff volunteer pool, alongside opportunities to refine the process and to use the Check-In system to make earlier wellbeing interventions.
 - d. An annual report on the Student Wellbeing Officers (SWOs) annual report, which summarised the work of SWOs in 2022/23. The Committee highly commended the work of the team, and noted that the positive feedback from Student Wellbeing Officers and academic departments indicated that effective working relationships have been established in the majority of academic departments, and that Student Wellbeing Officers were highly valued by students and staff.
 - e. Funding to support students, from OPPA. It noted 2022-23 was a record year for supporting students in terms of the number of scholarships supported by our donors community and the growth in our giving community. A new initiative, the University of Opportunity, being Championed by PVC Teaching Learning and Students and which aligns closely with the TLS Strategy has been launched in January 2024.
 - f. A report and action plan on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2023. The Committee noted there are many positives to be drawn from the 2023 PRES results. Priorities for 2023-24 are to look at PGR Induction and transition and to build more of a PGR community.

- g. A report by the GSA which investigates the experiences and challenges faced by Postgraduate Distance Learners (PGDLs). The research highlighted a lack of inclusive online events and direct communication strategies. The Committee noted the utility of improving communications in this area. A number of the recommendations within the report overlapped with those arising from the 3-Year reviews of York Online programmes, which were the subject of ongoing action plans being monitored by the Teaching Committee. The Co-Chair (Academic Registrar) would share the report with the PVC Teaching, Learning and Students and highlight its recommendations.
 - h. The Committee considered the Round Table Updates from Professional Services, the IPC and YGRS. It specifically noted that:
 - i. DTEF intended to establish a Student Housing Working Group to consider accommodation within the City of York. YUSU and GSA were keen to be represented in that Group, drawing on their expertise in student housing.
 - ii. A BAME Practitioner has been appointed to the Open Door team and is now actively engaging with students. The Committee requested an update on how this role was progressing.
2. The Committee noted the following updates or reports:
- a. An oral report from the Co-Chair (Interim Academic Registrar) and Co-Chair (YUSU President) reporting that work had commenced on the Student Support Plans project, which was designed to create, update, disseminate and facilitate the implementation of reasonable adjustments for disabled students. The University was engaged in the national review around suicide prevention which will identify HE sector approaches and help to proactively prevent suicide. Winter Graduation had been successful and the University was exploring the possibility of moving Winter Graduation in 2025 back to the last week of January to enable international students to attend before their visas expire. The Access and Participation Plan for the 5 years from 2025/26 was in preparation with a completion deadline of early March, when it would go before UTC. Subject to approval, YUSU planned to dedicate ring-fenced funding of c. £150k towards its Cost of Living work.
 - b. An update on recent activity from YUSU, noting in particular encouraging levels of sign-up for activities and events.
 - c. An update on activity from the GSA, noting in particular that the University had recently confirmed funding to support a pilot of conversational language workshops run by CertTESOL students and/or graduates later this semester, with this being opened up to all on-campus (UG & PG) international students.

Tom Banham and Pierrick Roger, Co-Chairs of Student Life Committee, February 2024