

University of York

Student Life Committee

Matters for note arising from the meeting of Student Life Committee held on 13 April 2023

1. The Committee **approved**:
 - a. The implementation plan for the Strategy for Sport and Active Wellbeing, to be monitored by the Committee on an annual basis. The Committee **observed** that a funded pilot to develop College sport had been successful, and expressed its support for extension of the funding.
 - b. A Policy and Procedure for Changes to Student Names, subject to minor changes in terminology and ordering of text. It was **reported** that the policy and procedure was designed to be person-centred, setting out ways in which students could change their names on University systems and official documentation to reflect their identity. Examples of good practice in the sector will be investigated to establish if further revisions to the policy would be helpful; and work will be done to make it easier to access students' preferred names in relevant systems.
2. The Committee **considered** annual reports for 2022/23 for the following areas:
 - a. Unity Health. A number of positive developments were **reported**, including additional appointments outside standard hours; an additional GP; students being employed by the practice; the resumption of the Student Patient Participation Group; and weekly eating disorder and psychological therapy clinics. The Committee **observed** that developments to allow students to evidence ECA claims by online medical records, via the NHS App, were welcome. It was **reported** that patients awaiting ADHD diagnosis and treatment faced significant waiting times of between 12 and 26 months, and that York Health Care Partnership had adopted a new pilot approach to reduce waiting times: this would restrict access to clinical diagnosis unless patients met certain criteria. The Committee **observed** that these developments would have significant implications for students awaiting an ADHD diagnosis. Disability Services was working with local partners on this issue and considering how best to support students; guidance would be provided to departments.
 - b. Accommodation. The Committee **noted** that demand for on-campus accommodation among returning students exceeded supply. DTEF was working to establish a clearer process and prioritisation criteria. This would make clearer to students their likelihood of obtaining on-campus accommodation. The Committee further **observed** the importance of Colleges having an appropriate balance between undergraduate and postgraduate students, and **noted** work with external providers to increase the breadth and variety of affordable student accommodation.
 - c. Catering and Retail. The Committee **noted** that a number of products in NISA were being provided to the University community at cost price and **observed** a number of welcome achievements detailed in the report.
3. The Committee **considered** the following reports relating to the cost of living:
 - a. A report on the Pulse Surveys held in the Spring Term 2023. The surveys had investigated reasons for students not taking up cost of living support. It was **reported** that this was being looked into by the Student Financial Support team. The survey further suggested that students could be put off by the language used around support or assume they were not the intended target: this issue will be considered further by the relevant teams. The surveys had established that students faced a significant increase in external rents for the 2023/24 academic year. Data on the take-up of Blackbullion financial wellbeing resources will be provided to YUSU.

- b. A confidential report on results from an Office for National Statistics Cost of Living Insights Survey, based on experimental data. The Committee **observed** that the report illustrated the worsening impact of cost of living issues on York students relative to the last iteration of the survey in November 2022: these results provided further support for plans around cost of living support in 2023/24. It further **observed** that, whilst prior analysis indicated that cost of living concerns had not led to an increase in student withdrawal, it would be helpful for retention data to be more readily available: this will be followed up with the Strategic Insight and Analysis team.
4. The Committee **considered** the following other reports:
 - a. The annual impact report from YUSU, commending the breadth of activity set out in the report.
 - b. A report on the experience of international students from YUSU, drawn from student focus groups. The discussion focused particularly on arrivals and transition. Whilst the University had relatively good survey results for this area, it was **observed** that the focus groups revealed some issues around practical aspects of arrival. A University Welcome Planning Group will be created to address and coordinate key practical, non-academic aspects of arrival. It was further **observed** that the volume of emails for new students could prevent key messages from getting through: this issue was being worked on by Internal Communications. Beyond this, specific comments in the report around Open Door and the Colleges will be followed up with those teams.
5. The Committee **noted** progress reports in relation to the following areas:
 - a. The Strategy for Student Mental Health and Wellbeing. The Committee **noted** that good progress was being made against the Strategy. It further noted work to develop resources to support resilience and also welcomed the move of online mental health support to TalkCampus, which provided 24/7, global support in multiple languages, clinical support and peer support.
 - b. The Sexual Violence Action Plan, **noting** in particular the Office for Students' intention to introduce a specific Condition of Registration in relation to sexual violence, which established more stringent regulatory expectations in this area. The action plan was being reevaluated against the proposed Condition. The Conduct and Respect Team was developing online consent training for students, and would assess whether and how this could be introduced, informed by any new Condition of Registration. The Committee further **noted** the trend in students reporting cases with contact details, which allowed for individual follow-up and support.
6. The Committee **noted** the following updates or reports:
 - a. The outcomes of the Colleges Governance Review, approved by the Academic Registrar. This established that College Councils would be chaired by Senior Fellows and the role of College Principal discontinued (College Managers would continue to have operational responsibility for the running of Colleges) and set out clearer terms of reference for College Councils.
 - b. An update on the action plan created in response to YUSU's report in 2021-22 on the experience of being a disabled student. The action plan has been merged with a broader action plan arising from the review of Disability Services and a number of 'quick wins' have been identified.
 - c. An oral report from the Co-Chair (Academic Registrar) on the Marking and Assessment Boycott; the submission of plans for the new Student Centre; and the relocation of Campus Safety.
 - d. A report from the Student Experience Operations Group from its February 2023 meeting.
 - e. Updates on recent activity from DTEF, Equality & Diversity, Open Door and Disability, the IPC, YUSU and the GSA. YUSU and GSA **reported** that they expected higher demand for their advice services due to the planned Marking and Assessment Boycott, and would appreciate involvement in contingency decisions to better inform students.
7. The Committee **received** its updated membership. YUSU's representation on the Committee will be further reviewed to ensure this was appropriate given different sabbatical officers' remits.