**UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON**

**COUNCIL / SENATE**

Summary Report on the latest meeting of Student Senate

The twenty-second meeting of the University Student Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, was held on Wednesday 1 November 2017.

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed all present, including many new representatives from academic departments who were recently nominated and attending for the first time. Some students were on Student Senate for a second year, though some in different representative roles. Sabbatical officers and college presidents, and senior staff members present, were also welcomed to the first meeting of the academic year. The full membership was listed in Paper 1: **Terms, of Reference, Composition and Membership**.

The **Report on the last meeting** (Paper 2), which had been presented to the University Senate and the Council was received and confirmed by those present as an accurate record of the meeting.

Under **Matters arising** it was noted that the allocations made under the student-led budget were already being used as proposed in this academic year.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. **University Strategic Plan 2014-19, and beyond**

Student Senate received a progress report on the University’s current Strategic Plan(Paper 3), which the Vice-Chancellor introduced. The meeting was advised that such a Plan was produced every five years to set out Roehampton’s aims for the period of the Plan. There were both overarching themes and more detailed aims, stated in a way that progress towards goals were measurable. The current Plan had a focus on maintaining good results, improving the student experience and job opportunities. About 70% of Roehampton students attained first-class or upper-first degrees, and 92% went into employment (70% in graduate level jobs) or further study soon after graduating.

It was also considered that Roehampton helped to foster students’ confidence about themselves and their futures, including encouraging and supporting placement and volunteering opportunities during studies. The University had also improved teaching facilities and spaces enormously, climaxing in the building and opening of the new Library.

However, as most of the Plan’s aims had been achieved earlier than the original timeframe, the University was about to commence writing a new Strategic Plan, covering a three year period 2018-21, and staff were interested to know what students present considered would improve the student experience in the future, and help to meet their needs and expectations.

Among responses at the meeting were the following:

* More creative spaces, linked to regular cross-programme events to showcase and publicise students’ outputs and achievements. There were many collaborative events already, but they required more publicity and a co-ordinated approach.
* Recognition and support of racial diversity on campus, and more support for international students
* Continued improvement in support for students resident off-campus, including spaces on-campus for them to feel welcome and mix with campus residents
* Increased publicity about careers and employability support
* More information to undergraduate students about postgraduate opportunities at Roehampton, perhaps with ‘taster’ opportunities
* Further strengthening of the personal tutor system, and greater consistency of approach to this across departments and programmes
* More peer-to-peer advice opportunities among UG and PG students
* More general - as well as focused - leadership programmes and conferences to inspire students
* Continued progress towards non-alcoholic social events and spaces
* More opportunities for students to organise internal conferences, and present their work, to assist general skills-development
* Speedier access to welfare services

The areas proposed by students mostly fell into groups relating to Community, Communications and Guidance, and these were certainly areas being explored both by staff and RSU.

Under this heading, the meeting also discussed ways to encourage students to engage with, and take a positive approach to, the value of the National Student Survey (NSS) in order to reflect their overall experience at Roehampton.

1. **Roehampton’s new University Library: Feedback**

This item was led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor and the University Librarian, who were seeking students’ views on the University’s new facilities, which were already proving very popular with students with significantly increased footfall compared to this time last year.

Among points raised at the meeting the major were:

* Increase Café opening hours, by extending to weekends, and/or ensure vending machines were in working order at those times
* Improve access (log-on) to computers, which was currently variable
* Ensure quiet zones were respected, and encourage sociable behaviour in the Library
* Provide more information and help with accessing materials, including shelf-use
* Consider more effective seating ‘rules’ to ensure maximum access of users
* Improve the entrance doorway

Overall the new Library had been well received and appreciated, but it was recognised by staff and students that there remained some snagging problems, and users were still learning about the facilities and how to get the most out of them.

1. **Roehampton Students’ Union: Plans and Priorities for the Year**

The RSU Sabbatical Officers welcomed the money that had been made available through Student Senate in recent years, and presented their plans for 2017-18 (Paper 4), highlighting the following major areas:

* Encouraging valuable staff/student interaction academically, and enhance NSS scores regarding feedback etc.
* Increasing RSU’s presence at Whitelands College
* Establish a ‘Reps for Off-campus’ (ROC) programme to further improve the experience on non-campus residents
* Encourage inclusivity within the diverse student population
* Review the RSU events policy, and balance special events and regular activities
* Advocate ‘Build you Union’ to encourage election involvement
* Encourage transport improvements to and from the University
* Encourage catering improvements at the University

Students at the meeting asked for assistance for academic societies in particular, and were pointed to RSU’s Societies Co-ordinator. There was also some discussion in relation to combatting sexual harassment, with the Bystander provision at RSU events welcomed but the small number of bystanders may not be adequate. Staff advised that a Sexual Assault Working Group had been formed to consider and try to address concerns in a co-ordinated way, and involving working with RSU.

This item and its presentation were welcomed by the Vice-Chancellor and the meeting.

**‘TOP OF YOUR AGENDA’**

*In this regular item students advised the meeting about a range of matters of particular interest to them as individuals at present.*

Among the matters raised by student members, problems in internal communications from programmes and about events was highlighted, and in discussion it was agreed to invite the new Internal Communications Officer to the next meeting of Student Senate.

Accommodation on campus, and related support such as laundry facilities, were also raised. In general it was considered that major concerns last year had been addressed but needed to remain under review. Maintenance of teaching spaces was also raised in relation to some buildings needing attention, but it was confirmed that improvements were in progress.

Recognition of diversity and the need for inclusivity (including of off-campus students) was welcomed by several students, and the importance of networking was recognised. RSU was addressing this, especially between societies, but also to encourage in general among students. Events designed to accommodate BAME students were welcomed by all.

Platforms for student work, exhibitions and conference were reiterated under this item. Lastly students requested that food prices on-campus should generally be affordable.

**Next meeting: February 2018**

Andrew Skinner

University Secretary and Secretary to Student Senate

November 2017