

ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY

SENATE

Report on the second meeting of the Student Senate held on 2 February 2011

Introduction and composition

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Sarah Lewins, RSU Volunteering Officer, and Luke Springett, RSU Societies President to this meeting. He noted that the Student's Union had requested that these two posts be added to the composition of Student Senate and that that proposal would be taken to the next meeting of the University Senate.

Senate is asked to approve the addition of the RSU Volunteering Officer and the RSU Societies President to the composition of the Roehampton University Student Senate

Business of the meeting

A Report on the first meeting of the Student Senate (Paper RSS2/1), held on Wednesday 13 October, previously circulated and presented to the University Senate, was received and approved by the meeting. Thereafter the business of the meeting proceeded as follows:

1. Report back from College RSU Presidents on consultations with students regarding enhancing the student experience (*Oral Reports*)

The four RSU College Presidents reported on discussions with students at their colleges regarding the student experience.

Tom Barrett (Froebel); reported that feedback was largely positive. Points raised:

- New lighting at the College had been welcomed

The following would be appreciated:

- Air conditioning in Library computer suites
- Cigarette extinguisher plates to avoid litter
- More 24/7 vending machines
- Permanent umbrellas in outdoor bar areas

Alex Feyler (Whitelands) noted that he appreciated the strong working relationships with the College Principal, Events Co-ordinator and Executive Officer, and the establishment of the Whitelands committee (which enabled problems to be identified and considered).

Luke Holliday (Digby Stuart); also noted largely positive feedback. Points raised:

- Heating problems in the Library/Duchesne/Howard/Jubilee
- More 24/7 vending machines needed
- Accommodation Maintenance: ovens, toasters etc. not working and long waits for repair
- Amigo shop: too expensive
- Library: queuing for printers
- Security: very good, positive response and not enough appreciated
- Information centre: very positive feedback

Adam Ozdemir (Southlands): Points raised:

- Support for jobs after University – careers support is not known about
- Access to books – need to provide more copies of basic texts
- Tutor support – need to increase contact time
- Accommodation/maintenance – variable quality of halls across the campus
- Gym – considered cramped, and no swimming pool access available?

These points were all noted by staff present and will be considered for further action.

2. Draft University Strategic Plan (Paper RSS2/2)

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a paper detailing the key priorities of the new University Strategic Plan, designed to be a mid-term Plan in the light of current government fiscal policy. He noted that the Plan is student-focussed and includes ideas that generated at the first meeting of the Student Senate.

Student members responded positively to the Plan. With respect to the section on 'High Quality Learning and Employability', student members emphasised that:

- improving student performance, and establishing links with employers should be a priority
- that the proposals reflected views expressed by students in the National Student Survey
- they supported reward mechanisms for staff that would identify and celebrate quality and achievements in teaching

Regarding 'Enhancing the Student Experience', student members emphasised:

- that the University Campus was certainly a major selling point for a London university
- that for resident students the Colleges provided a sense of community, and enhanced student support mechanisms
- that for students living off-campus that specific additional strategies were required to enhance a sense of belonging to the University
- that concentrating teaching for particular subjects in specific colleges was sometimes counter-productive to encouraging students' to mix

3. Draft University Employability Strategy (Paper RSS2/3)

The Director of Student Development introduced the latest version of the University Employability Strategy, seeking comments from the meeting.

Points raised by student members included:

- that they welcomed the introduction and development of an Employability Strategy that students could connect with from the start of their studies
- the importance of assisting students to articulate their employability skills, and to be pro-active in seeking work placements within a variety of employment networks
- the importance of development of essential skills within the curriculum
- provision of advice and (in particular, visa) services for international students, especially if they wanted to remain in the UK for employment opportunities after conclusion of studies

4. Plans for a referendum among students on use of an element of the University's budget (*Oral Report*)

The Vice-Chancellor sought the meeting's views on plans to ask students about a range of proposals for spending an element of the University Budget.

Student members noted a number of different mechanisms that could be used to solicit student input. Some suggested a general referendum while others proposed that Student Senate itself could be body to take the final decision. In the latter case, it would be incumbent upon the members of Student Senate to canvass the views of fellow students. A consensus emerged that the Student Senate could be asked to identify a short list of proposals which could then be the subject of a student referendum.

The Director of Finance was asked to bring proposals for possible expenditures, along with a proposal for the management of the referendum process, to the next meeting of Student Senate.

5. Partnership with Santander Bank (Paper RSS2/4)

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a Paper regarding an agreement reached with Santander Bank to provide a package of support to Roehampton University for an initial three year term. The benefits of this partnership include:

- scholarships, initially at Masters level, to increase in numbers over time
- a branch of the Bank, possibly from Easter 2011, in the current 'Waterstones' bookshop site
- development of joint Roehampton/Santander Student card
- work placements (initially 2 paid internships), and related advice

6. Development of a Student Benefit Card (Oral Report)

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Mr Cobb) advised the meeting of proposals for a Benefit/Loyalty Card at the University to offer students significant savings as part of a basket of benefits available on a single card. This would simplify and provide discounted access to a range of services, for example the gym, Waterstones' outlets, photocopying and printing services etc.

Purchase and use of the Card would be optional, and the range of services and discounts is being explored. The benefit card will not be linked to the Student card in the first year.

The proposals were welcomed by the meeting.

7. Recognition of Student Clubs and Societies (Paper RSS2/5)

Luke Springett, RSU Societies President, introduced a Paper which set out views on the relationship between the University and the many student societies that were established at Roehampton. The main points raised by the paper, and in discussion were:

- that societies may not be sufficiently appreciated, or supported, by staff and needed more investment and recognition in order to flourish
- that the subject-based societies which were most effective were usually based in small departments
- that student societies encouraged mixing with students from other subjects
- that encouragement to staff to support societies would pay dividends for students and staff alike
- that there was a potential link to developing employability skills and opportunities
- that training for society officers would be advantageous and would develop useful transferable skills

It was agreed that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor could take these matters to Heads of Departments and continue discussions on how to ensure sustainability beyond the efforts and investment of individuals. The Director, Employability and Sport agreed to explore ways to support and recognise student leadership activity related to societies and clubs.

8. Recognition of Programme Representatives (Paper RSS2/6)

Gemma Kelly, Academic Support Advisor, introduced a Paper regarding the (Academic) Programme Representative programme, including training, function and operation in Departments. The success of the programme, and the engagement with staff, was variable, and RSU sabbaticals and staff considered that changes needed to be made in order to encourage good practice and commitment in such a key area of communication and co-operation.

Matters raised in discussion were:

- that although RSU was now much more proactive in Programme Representative training, their recent review had indicated that commitment by Departments to representatives was very variable
- that input by Departments and staff was essential to the successful and optimum operation of the Programme Representative programme
- that Representatives found RSU very supportive, but programme administrators have less time to interact or help
- that many students do not know who their Representatives are, and appropriate publicity by staff and RSU is required
- that student/staff liaison groups, already present in some larger departments would be useful in all academic departments please

It was agreed that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor could take these matters to Heads of Departments and the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee for further exploration. Proposals, developed with Gemma and other RSU colleagues, would be brought to the next meeting of Student Senate.

9. Dates of future meetings (for consideration)

It was noted that Wednesday 27 April 2011 may not now be ideal for the next meeting of the Student Senate, as it fell in Consultation week, and just after Easter this year; an alternative date would be investigated with members however it seemed that the majority of members would be able to attend on 27 April and so it might ultimately remain the best date.

At the request of the RSU President, and other students present, the possibility of increasing frequency of Student senate from three to four meetings a year would also be investigated.

*ANDREW SKINNER,
DEPUTY UNIVERSITY SECRETARY
SECRETARY TO STUDENT SENATE
FEBRUARY 2011*