

ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY

SENATE

Report on the third meeting of the University Student Senate

The third meeting of the Student Senate was held on Wednesday 27 April 2011.

Business of the meeting

A Report on the second meeting of the Student Senate (*Paper RSS3/1*), held on Wednesday 2 February 2011, was approved. Thereafter the business of the meeting proceeded as follows:

1. Matters arising from the business of the last meeting

Student Clubs and Societies recognition (Paper RSS3/1a)

Natasha Blake (RSU) introduced a follow-up paper regarding Student Clubs and Societies recognition at the University, following awareness-raising with academic staff by the Provost's Team, and meetings with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Andy Masheter) and the Director of Student Development (Ian Pickup).

The Paper set out some models of best practice (e.g. the US 'Student life' model) that had been gleaned from RSU's research that had been discussed with student representatives and senior staff members. In particular it was considered that the skills and experience gained by participation or leadership of clubs and societies could be developed. Further, with RSU guidance there would be some restructuring of societies in order to achieve heightened awareness of the value of developing employability skills. This may include the development of society sponsor roles to coach society leaders and managers.

Academic staff had been encouraged by the Provost's Team to support clubs and societies, particularly the academic/department based societies, and it was noted that there was already good practice in certain academic departments, especially where staff/student liaison groups had been established.

Under this item, it was also noted that there had been considerable and welcome progress in the recognition of Student Academic Representatives within academic departments, thanks to the efforts of Emma Flight (Assistant Registrar) working with Gemma Kelly of the RSU.

It was also hoped to get the RSU Radio Station up and running for Freshers' Week later in the year, and to harness the interests of students on the Journalism programmes to assist.

Action: RSU, Pro Vice-Chancellor (AM)

2. University Fees Strategy (Paper RSS3/2)

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a Paper summarising the fees that the University had submitted to the Office of Fair Access regarding fee levels and associated student support commencing in 2012-13. The proposal, for banded fees with three levels (including a level for Foundation degrees), had been developed following widespread consultation with staff, current students, potential students and their parents and other key stakeholder groups, and via extensive market-research.

The University had proposed fees that will ensure the institution's sustainability, and also allow the University to be transparent in explaining how the fee would be used. It is expected that the Office of Fair Access will look favourably on the University's achievements regarding widening participation and retention, and there will be little requirement for redistribution of fee income as a result.

At the meeting the views of student representatives included the following:

- That banding of fees is an appropriate and helpful way of reflecting actual costs, and value for money, of Roehampton University programmes and experience
- That the research undertaken to arrive at the proposed fees was speedy, effective and produced clear results,
- That current students, and students union officers, could assist the University in publicising the University's fees' philosophy, and help to encourage potential students to come to University
- That Roehampton will need to maintain and improve student support in the light of rising fees, but this had already begun and there was obvious commitment from staff and management

3. Referendum on spending of an element of the University's Budget (Paper RSS3/3)

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a Paper prepared by the Director of Finance with proposals regarding objectives, process and timing of seeking students' views on spending an element (50k per annum) of the University's Budget.

The Student Senate agreed that, in the future, a student referendum for all students would be the preferred method of identifying spending priorities. However, in light of the time constraints in the current year, Student Senate considered the proposals set out in the Paper, in addition to others suggested at the meeting, for 2011/12 expenditure in order to allow suggestions to be effected more promptly.

Following extensive discussion, the five areas identified as priorities for financial support from the money set aside were as follows:

- Improved learning resources (IT, books etc.)
- Support for student clubs and societies
- 24-hour Library access (based on minimal security-officer staffing, rather than library staff commitment)
- Campus improvements (largely small scale requests)
- Improved climate control in 'Wired' cafe

Action: Director of Finance; Senior Staff

4. Further Study (Oral Report)

The Director of Student Development noted that preliminary results of the HEFCE DLHE (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education) Survey indicated that fewer Roehampton students appear to be going on to further study, either at Roehampton or elsewhere. The Director of Student Development sought the meeting's views on what might be responsible for this trend, particularly in the current climate of increasing costs of undergraduate study.

Student members advised:

- That many students were not fully aware of the opportunities available at the University for further study, or were uncertain of the demands of postgraduate level programmes
- That there is good practice in some areas, such as English, which had set up useful information sessions to advise students of the opportunities in their programme areas
- That many students were not aware of the 20% discount opportunities available to Roehampton undergraduate students pursuing studies at the postgraduate level
- That discount opportunities for PGCE study would be welcomed
- That many students considering further study were discouraged by the additional costs of travel, childcare and other subsidiary costs in the context of academic fees
- That students often prefer to take a gap-year (or longer period) after undergraduate study, and the possibility of guaranteed deferred entry would be welcomed

The meeting was advised that whilst all students, whether from Roehampton or outside, would have to meet all appropriate entry requirements for postgraduate programmes, consideration would be given to providing appropriate assistance, and more information earlier, in relation to further study.

Action: University Secretary; Director of Student Development

5. QAA Institutional Review (Paper RSS3/4)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced a Paper regarding the Quality Assurance Agency's Institutional Review Visit, which would take place in 2012/13, and would require separate student-led input from the University's staff input. The Paper detailed the context and nature of the review process, which continued to evolve, and the establishment of a Working Group – with student input - to prepare for the review and visit.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor and staff; RSU

6. Feedback from NUS Conference (Oral Report)

Members of the Roehampton Students' Union updated the meeting on the business of the recent Conference of the National Union of Students (NUS), which has elected a new President.

More details are available in the May edition of the RSU publication 'Fresh', available to students and staff across the University.

7. Review of the Year and dates of future meetings (Paper RSS3/5)

As this was the last meeting of the academic year, the Vice-Chancellor thanked all present, and those unable to attend this meeting, for the quality of the debate and the input into strategy and policy, of the University Student Senate during its first year of existence. The Student Senate remained unique in the HE Sector, and had proved its value in the life of the University from the first meeting.

Those leaving the University at the end of the academic year were thanked especially for their conscientious approach to the work of the Student Senate.

The dates proposed for meetings of the Student Senate in 2011-12 were as follows:

Autumn Term: Wednesday 2 November 2011

Spring Term: Wednesday 1 February 2012

Summer Term: Wednesday 2 May 2012

It was proposed that all meetings will commence at 2.00pm.

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