

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

SENATE

Report on the fourth meeting of the University Student Senate

The fourth meeting of the Student Senate was held on Wednesday 23 November 2011.

At the commencement of the meeting, the Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of the Student Senate, welcomed new members. These included new student representatives from the Academic Departments and other student constituencies, nominated by the Roehampton Students' Union Council. Members introduced themselves briefly.

Business of the meeting

The composition and current membership of the Student Senate (detailed in Paper RSS4/1) were noted by the meeting.

A Report (Paper RSS4/2) on the third meeting of the Student Senate, held on Wednesday 27 April 2011, was approved and its contents noted.

Thereafter the business of the meeting proceeded as follows:

1. Matters arising from the business of the last meeting

Update on spend on funds allocated by Student Senate 2011-12 (Paper RSS3/2a)

Andy Masheter, Pro Vice-Chancellor, updated the meeting on spending related to £50k of University income, ring fenced as part of the Student Partnership at Roehampton.

The Paper set out spending related to five key and specific areas identified by Student Senate last academic year, exact allocation of which was determined by the University's Financial Strategy Group. The areas identified and concerned were:

- funding for student clubs and societies, to be developed in the new 'Student Life' Project;
- extended opening hours for the Library, confirmed for specific key assessment periods;
- improved learning resources, effected via the Patron-driven acquisitions scheme, which was in high demand with funds allocated spent already;
- campus improvements, largely via provision of additional benches across the sites; and
- climate control in 'Wired' Café, via application of 'solar film'

The current membership of Student Senate welcomed these actions, and the Vice-Chancellor indicated that consideration would be given to a similar process for seeking student input into allocation of a sum of income would occur in 2011-12.

2. Proposed Industrial Action (Oral Report from Vice-Chancellor/staff members)

The Vice-Chancellor advised the meeting that the University would almost certainly be affected by industrial action called for by many of the nation's Public Service Unions, scheduled to take place on Wednesday 30 November.

Although some staff were expected to be absent as a result of the action, the University was doing all it could to minimise the impact on students, and on teaching sessions and related activities.

Messages would be sent to students and staff regarding the action, and it was hoped that many students would have notice of teaching sessions which would not be occurring on 30 November. However, there was no obligation on staff to advise whether they would be absent in advance of the day, so it was unfortunately not possible to be sure that advice given to students was entirely accurate.

3. Update on Student 'Programme Representatives' Processes (Paper RSS4/3)

Gemma Kelly, Academic Advisor in Roehampton Students introduced a paper summarising progress in relation to student Programme Representatives (Programme Reps), following discussion at two previous meetings of the Student Senate.

Considerable progress had been made in most academic Departments following discussions with the Assistant Registrars, and the establishment of the Department Officers as prime conduits between RSU and departmental staff regarding Programme Reps.

This improvement in process and approach was welcomed by staff and students present, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor pointed out the importance of such improvements in relation to the coming QAA visit to the University in 2012/13, when a submission from students co-ordinated by Roehampton Students' Union will be required in parallel to the University's own submission.

As certain academic areas still needed further encouragement in Programme Rep activities, Gemma Kelly would speak further with Prof. Pat Corcoran, outside the meeting.

4. Student Satisfaction Surveys (Presentation and Paper RSS3/3)

Mark Ellul, the University's Head of Planning, made a presentation to the meeting regarding the National Student Survey (NSS) of final year undergraduate students, in particular regarding Roehampton's most recent results in relation to a number of key questions in the NSS, where the University's performance does not appear to be improving significantly despite efforts being made.

Regarding 'Overall satisfaction' with programme of study, student representatives present considered that students may be interpreting the question more broadly, in relation to general satisfaction.

It was considered that two factors may therefore have influenced students' assessments: apparent lessening of the College dimension of the student experience, and a perception that after-study social events are few. It was recognised that many final year undergraduate students lived off-campus, and may be more aware of a lack of after-study events to attract them. However it was also noted that the RSU was endeavouring to educate students in the exact meaning of the various questions in the NSS, including this enquiry which related to satisfaction with academic programmes.

In relation to questions about enhancement of careers prospects, there still seemed to be issues relating to the services offered by employability staff, and overall 'visibility' and accessibility of the service, despite extensive restructuring and change in focus of employability information provision. Further publicity from staff and via the RSU was suggested, and the possibility of concentrating Departmental careers events in one 'campaign' week during the year was supported. A move of the employability staff base to the Library would also be welcomed by students.

The other questions investigated at the meeting related to feedback; how much student feedback to programmes was acted upon by staff (which would be further discussed by the RSU Academic Adviser and the Deputy Provosts), and post-assessment feedback to students by staff. It was considered that deadlines for staff to provide feedback would greatly assist management of students' expectations and address concerns, and that consideration should be given to identifying good practice among varying methods of providing feedback, both of which would be considered by the Deputy Provosts.

Action: Deputy Provosts; RSU Academic Adviser

Also in relation to this item, the RSU presented a Paper addressing how to encourage students to take part in the NSS. The full range of suggestions in the Paper would be considered at a meeting about the NSS to be convened by Andy Masheter shortly, but the meeting was particularly interested in providing incentives to students, such as print-credit, or opportunities to win a prize, and increasing the methods for completion via technological devices. These recommendations would be investigated further.

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor; Head of Planning

5. New Website for the University (Presentation)

Andy Masheter, and Roger Jones (Consultant on the Digital Media Project), made a presentation of the new University Website, to be launched shortly.

The presentation, visual content and dynamic nature of the new design was welcomed by the meeting, as was the ability for it to be easily accessed on various mobile devices, and 'geographically intelligent' in relation to its users.

Feedback would be welcomed from all users once the Website was launched.

6. Catering provision at the University (Presentation)

The Director of Property and Facilities Management, Dr Ghazwa Alwani-Starr, presented the various options available, and improvements made in, catering provision across the University, at a range of thirteen outlets now available with varied opening hours.

The service, managed by Chartwells, is subsidised and non-profit-making, and it was considered that there was now a wide range of offering available across the campus, which each outlet catering to particular theme or range of fare.

Students present queried some of the opening/serving times, and whether they were consistently maintained. They also advised that many students do not travel across the campus to take advantage of the different food on offer, and will sometimes go outside to seek lower prices, or use take-away services, which were convenient if sometimes more expensive.

It was also suggested by students present that ready-meals on sale in the University (Amigo) Shop or other outlets would be appreciated, and would sell well. Proposals to further develop Digby Square as a place to 'meet and eat' were welcomed.

Feedback would be welcomed from students on catering provision and outlets.

7. Student-led Teaching Awards (Paper RSS4/5)

Alex Murray, President of the Roehampton Students' Union, presented proposals for a series of University-wide Teaching Awards. Eight awards in total were proposed in the initial round, 2011-12, and nominations would be sought between 28 November this year and March 2012. Such awards had been established at other Universities, and the proposals were welcomed by the Student Senate meeting.

RSU would welcome input on how to involve students in the nomination process.

8. Date of next meeting:

Spring Term: 2.00pm on Wednesday 8 February 2012

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