

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

SENATE

Report on the fifth meeting of the University Student Senate

The fifth meeting of the Student Senate was held on Wednesday 8 February 2012.

At the commencement of the meeting, the Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of the Student Senate, welcomed new members and presenters, including Ian Pickup, Director of Student Affairs, and Julie Hall, Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement.

Business of the meeting

A Report (Paper RSS05/1) on the fourth meeting of the Student Senate, held on Wednesday 23 November 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

Re: Note 1 in the Report: *Spend on funds allocated by Student Senate 2011-12*

The Vice-Chancellor reminded the meeting of the process used last year to determine the areas that students would prefer ring-fenced funding to be spent on. The process involved seeking the views of Student Senate after a useful and informed discussion of various proposals and suggestions for allocation.

The Vice-Chancellor considered that this had been an effective method of determining allocations, and perhaps preferable to a student-wide referendum. Following discussion, the meeting proposed that RSU and senior staff should propose a number of possible areas to sponsor which could be debated by Student Senate.

Action: RSU Sabbatical Officers; Senior Staff

Re: Note 4: *Student Satisfaction Surveys*

Andy Masheter advised the meeting that students were being asked how they consider the University could score better student surveys, as there was currently a mismatch between responses given in focus groups and survey scores submitted. Roehampton was attempting to find out how students consider the University could improve in a manner that would be reflected in scores in the future.

Re Note 7: *Student-led Teaching Awards*

Alex Murray advised the meeting that nominations for awards were currently being gathered via a Survey Monkey process.

2. **Strengthening Collegiality, Community and Staff and Student Experience**

(Paper RSS05/2 from Andy Masheter, Pro Vice-Chancellor; plus related matters from RSU Sabbatical Team)

The Pro Vice-Chancellor introduced a wide range of proposals drawing together discussions over the past two years, to provide a blueprint for delivery of a collegiate experience and to strengthen a sense of community at the University.

A first group of recommendations (numbered 1, 3, 4, and 11) relate to College Ethos and a second group to College spaces (2, 10) a final group concerns Community and Identity (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9).

As well as being used to consult Student Senate, this Paper was going to the University Senate, Heads of Colleges and RSU, including College Presidents. RSU had already developed prototype college 'mascots', and were interested to hear what students would like in addition to consolidate identity.

Student Senate supported the proposals in the paper, and also raised the following points during discussion:

- The importance of ensuring both resident and non-resident students had a sense of collegiality, and events were designed to attract them
- That 'taster-days' with Colleges could be set up for applicants to set out the advantages of College life
- That good-quality designated social spaces were essential at colleges, and programmes of events could be linked to these spaces (*see item 4 below*)
- The importance of the availability of appropriate facilities within College social spaces
- That it was recognised that pursuing collegial ideals, processes and events required buy-in from students, RSU and the University, in partnership
- Aspects of the appointment process of flat representatives, which were currently being reconsidered and revised

3. **'Student Life': Progress** (Paper RSS05/3, from Andy Masheter, Pro Vice-Chancellor, and Ian Pickup, Director of Student Affairs)

The 'Student Life' Project has been developed, between the University and the RSU, largely by building on discussions initiated at Student Senate and emphasising the value to students of:

- Participation in, and leadership of, University-based clubs and societies
- Opportunities for this in a wider range of departmental societies (ideally in all academic departments)
- A greater awareness of the value of leadership and employability skills

This Paper documented progress so far, and intended next steps for the Project. Student Life required a strong partnership of between various areas of the University and the Students' Union, and a greater development of shared resources. The key focus would be to enhance the extra-curricular experience of all Roehampton students, whether resident on campus or non-resident.

Student Senate welcomed the proposed establishment of a Working Group to develop the Project, and also the establishment of a Student Life Office (employing intern staff) to facilitate cross-University co-ordination of campus-wide activities.

In answer to specific questions put to the meeting about the next steps, Student Senate supported modest funds being allocated mainly to existing clubs and societies (ideally at least one per academic department), not least to fund mentoring in financial management and other key skills related to society management.

The meeting also considered that intern staff or student ambassadors employed in a Student Life Office could usefully manage advertising of activities, and look into engagement with the local and Wandsworth communities to widen student experience.

The current RSU Meeting room was considered to be the best location for the Student Life Office, as many students would know of the location already or could be easily guided to it; the meeting also considered how the Office could be best equipped technically for its functioning and purpose.

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (AM); Director of Student Affairs; VP Activities (RSU)

4. **Short-term targets for Social Spaces** (*Item from RSU Sabbatical Team*)

Students' Union Sabbatical Officers sought input from the meeting about the successful establishment and use of social spaces across the University, and what would ensure those spaces would be fit for purpose and used by students.

Responses included the need for cleanliness and basic utilities, reasonable furniture and a generally attractive setting to encourage students to be drawn to these rooms. A comfortable common-room style was considered preferable to a bar facility, although the ability to set up such a facility on occasion would be an advantage.

Other aspects that would be appreciated is the provision of user-friendly sound systems, and access to 'Sky' TV channels.

These points, and others students may wish to contribute after the meeting, would be put to the Bars and Social Space Group, chaired by the Director of Property and Facilities Management, for further consideration.

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (RB); Director of P&FM

5. **Sports Pitch Facilities** (*Item from RSU Sabbatical Team*)

RSU representatives enquired about Sport Pitch Facilities, which had currently been reduced as the Whitelands Pitch, was not fit for use due to poor grass quality and related health and safety issues.

The Vice Chancellor and Director of Student Affairs advised the meeting that the University had been in negotiation with Wandsworth Council in relation to the use of Dover House playing Fields, a short distance from the campuses. Those negotiations were nearing conclusion, and it was intended that the pitches would be available for use on a shared basis (i.e. during mutually agreed periods in the week) for the start of the coming academic year. The facilities were very good, including 'AstroTurf' surfaces and floodlights and (in time) potential pavilion accommodation.

Meanwhile, the cost of renovating the Whitelands Pitch was being assessed.

6. **Student-led Action Research** (Paper RSS05/4, from Julie Hall, Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement)

Julie Hall sought agreement from Student Senate to move forward with a new proposal to place student-led action research at the heart of the University's strategy to enhance learning and teaching. A one-year pilot internship in the LTEU was proposed, in order to support related projects. At the end of the pilot scheme, its value and potential continuation would be further assessed.

The plan to move to student-led research would allow researchers to act as executive consultants, and identify needs and lead changes in University processes and procedures. It would also greatly enhance the employability skills of those involved, with opportunities to develop transferable skills and record these on *curriculum vitae*.

Student Senate welcomed the proposals, and the opportunities for personal development they encompassed. Other relevant University committees had also backed the proposals, and a report-back on progress would come to a future meeting.

Action: Director of LTEU

7. **Security Matters** (*Item from RSU Sabbatical Team*)

Alex Murray, President of the Roehampton Students' Union, raised concerns re security at Froebel College gateway following a recent incident. The PVC/Director of Finance assured the meeting that security arrangements had been tightened up.

8. **Date of next meeting:**

2.00pm on Wednesday 9 May 2012

*Andrew Skinner, Deputy University Secretary
Secretary to Student Senate
February 2012*