

# School Presidents' Forum

10 November 2014, 5.15pm, Lower College Lawn

## MINUTES

**Present:** Ondrej Hajda (Director of Representation), Darya Smirnova (Education Officer), Tania Strützel (Postgraduate Convenor), Charlotte Potter (Arts/Divinity Faculty Presidents), Katy Rae (Science/Medicine Faculty President), Hannah Chinn (Art History), Louise Cameron (Biology), Rhiann Ferguson (Chemistry), Alex Taylor (Divinity), Katy Relph (Earth & Environmental Sciences), Oliver Harrison (Economics & Finance), Hannah Smith (English), George King (Geography & Sustainable Development), Jack Carr (History), Ainikki Riikonen (International Relations), Yeung Cheung (Management), Kelly Johnston (Mathematics & Statistics), Dawnn Khoo (Medicine), Janine Gallagher (Modern Languages), Eleanor Mullin (Philosophy), Louise McCaul (Physics & Astronomy), Danielle Polemeni-Hegarty (Social Anthropology), Yuet So (ELT Society Representative), Professor Lorna Milne (Proctor), Professor Al Dearle (Dean of Science), Professor Kristin De Troyer (Dean of Arts and Divinity).

**Apologies:** Catherine Stihler (Rector), Maxwell Fabiszewski (Classics), Alexey Sazonov (Computer Science), Marcin Kupiecki (Film Studies), Mary Kempnich (Psychology & Neuroscience).

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Ondrej welcomed everyone to the second School Presidents' Forum of the academic year 2014-15.

Minutes of the previous meeting from 23 October 2014 were approved.

### 2 MATTERS ARISING

#### a) Joint Honours Dissertations

Feedback received by School Presidents showed that there had been a lot of support for introducing Joint Honours dissertations. There were some concerns about credits, supervision, deadlines and marking. The Dean of Arts and Divinity reassured that everyone would be treated in a fair way. The Proctor informed that the aspiration would be to introduce Joint Honours dissertations for the following year but with the understanding that it might also take longer.

**AP: Dean of Arts to look into implementing Joint Dissertations.**

#### b) Students Code of Conduct

Ainikki explained that they would run an awareness campaign about student code of conduct during lectures at the beginning of Semester 2. The idea was welcomed by everyone.

**AP: Ainikki, Yeung, and Danielle to finalize a proposal for awareness campaign at the beginning of Semester 2 about student conduct during lectures.**

### **c) Feedback Focus Groups**

It was explained that the feedback focus groups ran into problems with attendance in some Schools. It was suggested that the lack of interest was because students in certain Schools were happy with the feedback they received.

**AP: Max to collate responses from everyone and write a report on the feedback focus groups by the start of Semester 2.**

### **3 READING WEEK**

There was a general concern about the amount of stress students had to deal with because of the change in the academic calendar and their effect on their mental health. It was acknowledged that the absence of Reading Week had very little impact on students' academic performance but students and staff felt more exhausted and were less inclined to get involved in extracurricular activities.

The Students' Association Education Committee proposed to introduce a list of options for each School to choose from to ensure something was done about the workload in each School. The Proctor expressed concern about the lack of consistency among Schools.

There was a feeling that students were not comfortable with starting classes in Orientation Week.

**AP: Charlotte & Katy to collate responses from School Presidents about what is being done in place of reading week in each School.**

### **4 UCU SETTING & MARKING BOYCOTT**

The Proctor regretted the current situation regarding the USS pension scheme that resulted into the setting & marking boycott. She added that the University sympathises with its staff members and their concerns about the future of their pensions. It was acknowledged that the proposed changes to the pension scheme could have a detrimental effect on the quality of lecturers that the University could attract.

Students were encouraged to ask their tutors if they were taking part in the boycott and to pass any feedback about the situation to Ondrej.

**AP: School Presidents to encourage students to pass any feedback about the UCU setting & marking boycott to Ondrej on dorep@.**

### **5 REVIEW OF SCHOOL PRESIDENTS' ROLE**

Ondrej explained that the role and time commitment of School Presidents grew enormously since its creation in 2010 and asked how the Students' Association and the University can facilitate transition into the role and support School Presidents in their office.

There were some concerns that if the role grew any bigger that people would not be interested in the position. It was acknowledged that the University staff could

do more to support School Presidents. However, it was agreed that it was important to set boundaries and expectations for the role before the election and the Students' Association would run a survey of the School President role to inform this exercise.

It was noted that the issue of a workload of the Modern Languages School President would be dealt with separately at a meeting between Ondrej and Janine.

**AP: The Proctor to include the role of School Presidents in the training for new Directors of Teaching.**

**AP: Ondrej to send a survey to School Presidents about their role and their time commitment.**

**AP: Ondrej to create a role description for School Presidents before the new election cycle.**

#### **6 AOCB**

There was no any other business.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

School Presidents' Forum on 23 February at 5.15pm in the Students' Association Committee Room.