HUU Course Rep Forum 2: Minutes

November – December Forum
Session 1: Student Central Meeting Room 1, 17:00 on 27/11/18. 35 Academic Reps attended.

Session 2: Allam Medical Building, Teaching Room 1, 13:00 on 28/11/18. 24 Academic Reps attended.

Online Course Rep Forum via Canvas and Facebook, 19:30 on 04/12/18. 74 Academic Reps attended.

1. **Welcome and Introductions: Isobel Hall, HUU President of Education (Chair)**

IH introduced herself to attendees and opened proceedings. Reps were requested to sit in groups with others from their faculty.

2. **Let's talk timetabling, with Ian Aylett, IA(Registry Services)**

IA explained the main issues that have arisen with the teaching timetable, including problems with the iHull app and timetable changes. Other examples were block scheduling of lectures, timetable clashes and weekly changes to times and locations. It was noted in FHS that there had been things on the timetable that lecturers did not know about.

IA presented images of the current timetabling software that has been in use since 1995, and explained that the software avoids scheduling at undesirable times, such as Friday afternoons, unless absolutely necessary. It is unfortunate, but necessary for some sessions to be scheduled for that time. The allocation of rooms was explained by IA, with the example that the only room for more than 244 students is the Esk Buildings Allam lecture theatre.

IA explained the measures taken to resolve problems:

- Review of iHull and IT are working on a new app
- Starting the week commencing 3rd December, Canvas notifications will be sent to students regarding timetable changes.
- Timetabling are working with faculties to understand programme structures and meeting with every module leader
- The Timetabling SharePoint site contains many FAQs

IA invited questions and gave the following responses:

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- In response to some timetables being visible at the time of the forum: The timetables visible at the time of the CRF were subject to change before 3rd December. FSE Rep
- For non-nursing students the software should not allocate more than four hours in a row, and will also give a lunch break sometime between 11am and 2pm.
- All trimester one sessions should be available and if there are problems with this then students should speak to the hub. FHS Rep
- If something is on the timetable that does not exist then students should contact the hub as they may be noted as absent. FSE Rep
- Timetabling would like to include AST meetings and SSFs, however, there would not be an easy way of programming the software and scheduling for teaching is already difficult. FACE Rep

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- Following a query on the previous day, IA confirmed that his team will act swiftly if the information about a problem is received by them
- Canvas notifications are to inform students of changes and cancellations
- There will be improved timetables in trimester 2 compared to trimester 1
- If room allocations are unsuitable students need to speak to the lecturer who has requested the room type. There may be a need for an open discussion with Timetabling. FACE
- Timetabling are investigation new software but it is a large project
- Timetabling work hard to keep classes to the same room and time each week for consistency
- Students logging in each time they visit iHull was the only option as the interface wasn't correct (you don't have Rep info here)

IA concluded by inviting any future questions to be passed via IH or by visiting the hubs.

IH explained her work with the Timetabling team and that there is a Timetabling Working Group. There are currently 2700 module combinations, and 20% of third year students have unique individual pathways. There is likely to be new timetabling software and a new app in the near future and the university is addressing the issues.

3. Exam Timetables/Assignments/Hubs – Sarah Londsborough, SL (Faculty Business Manager, FACE)

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IH introduced Sarah who informed the room of the Hubs Oversight Group, which represents all the four faculties. SL welcomed feedback from Academic Reps. The discussion took into account the experiences of students in all faculties.

- It was highlighted by an FHS Rep that students felt it was difficult to find the number of the hub. The request was for a list posted on the website.
- When asked if they get what they need from Hubs? FSE feedback was that issues were often subject or course specific and that some need the department offices because students knew which staff they could talk to. Further comments stated that there was too much staff rotation at the Hub desk and this did not help when students needed information imminently, and were not good at replying to emails.
- SL explained that the staff from the previous structure were now in the Hubs, and this meant that the information is still available in one central location. The other three faculties have dedicated reception staff, however, FSE still work on a staff rota for this.

SL – Is the FSE model university wide?

- FBLP: Commented that staff in the Hub often did not recognise the course that students had issue with. Information is not immediately accessible due to the location of the Hub and lectures taking place across campus. This challenge for FBLP students was acknowledged by SL.
- FACE: One Rep admitted to not really knowing what the Hub was, and was asked if they had ever been to the Hub, to which the answer was no. If students needs help they visit the lecturer.
- Some students also acknowledged uncertainty about the purpose of the Hub and the support available.

SL – Is it a lack of training for Hub staff?

- FSE: Students have to explain their issue to a different member of staff each time, and with a queue of other behind them.
- FACE Subject Rep praised the Hub and that they have never experienced problems. Issues have been resolved quickly and will make the effort to find the answer to a query. 'The process works really well.'
- FHS Hub location: The desk is too open meaning that students have no privacy when wanting to explain sensitive issues. The previous office had the facility to close a door.
- SL explained the differences between the former office structure and the move to faculty hubs, including the improved opening times and accessibility.
- FSE: Each subject area has different requirements and that the lack of knowledge and training in the Hub is a problem. The suggestion made was that a list online (Canvas module) of the

individual hub staff and their area of responsibility would be helpful.
- FACE: Suggestion of a 'central community' for sharing of information and good practice between hubs.

FACE Rep brought up the topic of extensions: That FACE staff have been very helpful with last minute requests, however students have found themselves in a 'mess' about it, as once the deadline is passed then marks are lost (Audio recording not entirely clear on the detail.)

- SL explained that it is a university policy but that the feedback would be useful.
- FBLP: Process for requesting extensions had been complicated due to the need to speak to a number of offices including the Hub and their AST, and with just a two-day deadline.
- FHS: Discrepancy between faculties on mitigating circumstances: The example of needing to provide evidence of a family emergency straight away, rather than being reassured that it can be dealt with when the student returns.

FBLP: SL and IH, What would have happened if the referendum had resulted in students voting for a return to departmental offices?

- IH explained that as President of Education, she would have been mandated to present the case for bringing back departmental offices, and the Students Union would be required to lobby the University for this change.
- IH asked who would prefer departmental offices. Five Reps raised their hands from 35 attending.

SL acknowledged that there is work to be done with FSE, and explained that 1st and 2nd years have not experienced the previous structure. To return to department offices would create individual points of failure too, such as staff taking annual leave when they are in smaller team.

FSE: Rep asked if it was possible for them to have both structures, Hub and department.

SL explained that it would be ideal to work towards FSE liking their Hub as much as the others do. (Laughter). SL confident that this is possible and would like to do work faculty by faculty, and there are quick and easy solutions to some of the issues.

SL pleased with the honest views of the Reps at the CRF.

IH advised Reps that there are many ways to make change. Students can present issues to the President of Education, start a petition, campaign for a referendum or Union Council meet every month and motions can be submitted for consideration.

FSE Rep suggested that it would be useful to have meetings with more people that work in the hubs. IH suggested open forums taking place in each faculty for all students to contribute.

IH closed the section of the forum on the hubs, and directed Reps to the survey on assessment and feedback and invited them to complete it.

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SL was not present at the second session of the forum.

IH explained the referendum surrounding the faculty hubs that took place in 2018 and the content of the previous session, with FSE appearing to be less satisfied than the other faculties.

Reps queried the level to which the referendum was publicised and whether HUU had been encouraged not to promote it. Reps also felt that the referendum had been biased.

IH responded:

- There were issues with the wording of the question
- From its submission, the referendum must be done within a specified time
- During exam season was not the ideal time to hold a referendum
- Agreed that it hadn't been well promoted
- The university was not involved but agreed that it would be insensitive to advertise it near the hubs. The result could have put peoples jobs at risk
- The referendum showed that there were lots of issues to be addressed

Further problems raised:

- Hub staff do not know who or where to refer a student to. FSE
- Suggestion made that Hubs could be split into departments in their current location
- The FACE Hub was praised for its efficiency and assistance, but that students should have a main point of contact for familiarity and avoid things being explained twice

IH explained that staff have been working on improvements since the referendum, and one reason for moving from departments was to remove the inconsistencies. There are three options, work to improve the hubs, split the Hubs into departmental teams or lobby for a return to the former system. IH also suggested the need for working groups to gather student feedback on the topic.

Online Forum: 04/12/18

IH asked Reps present for their thoughts on the hubs:

- Some Reps suggested returning to the former departmental office system
- IH stated that FACE Reps are generally happy with their hub, and FHS Reps stated that the hub worked for them and it is better that than 18 months ago
- FACE hub is ideally located for PGCE students
- However, FHS hub was criticised for not always informing students that absences have been noted, and some feel that the open and public nature dissuades students from discussing sensitive issues with staff at the desk
- Staff at the Hubs need more training
- FSE Hub Location is unsuitable for some subjects now it is in the Ferens Building
- FBLP – mixed opinions – Politics students would prefer a return to the departmental office

IH explained the referendum that occurred in May 2018 and the role of the Student Union President and President of Education on the Hubs Working Group.

IH explained that each Hub, with the exception of FSE, has a dedicated reception team to deal with students and enquiries.

IH is to send out a survey to gather feedback on the Hubs.

4. **Mid-session Activity**

IH explained the Chocolate and Chat event of that week based around collecting views on assessment & feedback, and requested Reps to complete the survey. Reps were invited to discuss the main issues within their faculty specific groups.

- Some students experience an assignment deadline each week for a prolonged period. IH advised talking to module leaders about moving the dates.
- Some experience multiple deadlines on the same date
- Formal complaints have been made but not dealt with

Online Forum – 04/12/18

- A mixture of preference was demonstrated between students wanting more 1-2-1 time with lecturers, and those wanting more annotated work. IH suggested using staff drop-in hours, although Reps highlighted that these hours were not very clear.
- Staff are marking work to different standards. IH advised that this should be taken up with the teaching staff.

5. **President of Education Update and Education Exec Update**

IH announced that, following her campaign to increase the printing credits for students and collecting over 1000 signatures, the motion has been approved. Students will now receive £20 per year from the university for the purposes of printing.

Objectives:
- Attempting to set up a Student Voice Strategic Group
- Postgraduates Space Survey to look at what both taught and research students want from the space on campus
- The first postgraduate taught working group, and IH looking for PG students to join in
- Timetabling, as explained
- HUU working to improve the Course Rep Handbook
- Working towards providing hoodies for Academic Reps
- Looking at assessment & feedback through the survey and Chocolate and Chat
- Following a forum IH is writing up the Nursing Report
- Waiting for a licence for the TED talks
- Producing a handbook for the Education Exec.

6. **National Higher Education Issues**

IH highlighted the Higher Education issues surrounding policy and gave a list of useful websites to visit for more information.
- Recent BBC article about three UK universities facing bankruptcy
- Office for Students: A student focussed regulatory framework
- Post 18 Education Review
- Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)
- Mental Health Issues
- National Student Voice Survey (NSS)
- The University of Hulls current position in the league table and its silver rating
- Declining student numbers and competition

7. **General Discussion/Feedback**

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IH invited questions and comments from Reps regarding any further issues:
- It would be beneficial for the timetable to be released earlier to allow students who travel more time to plan their journeys. FBLP
- The library do not send notifications to inform if a book has been returned. FACE
- For core text, requirements there should be two copies available. FSE

- Lecturers often want to see students despite them being out on placement. FHS
- One instance noted of a book order at the library taking many months to arrive. FBLP
- Issue of accessibility with some required text in book form being too large, yet the text is not available online.

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- It would be beneficial for exam timetables to be available earlier as students do have other commitments. FSE
- Deadlines all coming at the same time. FACE
- Appointments made with Health and Wellbeing should fit around the student timetable. FSE

Online Forum: 04/12/18

- Library should send text message reminders for book returns
- Joint honours students at SSFs: Two subjects should not be scheduled at the same time to allow effective representation at both
- Can SSFs be added to student timetables? This is already happening for some students
- Rep queried whether the café in AMB was closing. IH to raise the concern
- Can funding be provided for overseas students to help with field trips? IH advised talking to the Advice Centre
- Can funding be given to students doing volunteer work to help with expenses? IH suggested that this could be a topic for a campaign
- A list of lecturers office hours should be listed online
- There should be more support in finding voluntary placements for students
- FHS students would like to be provided with more than three uniforms while on placement

8. Alumni Events Discussion/Volunteering Opportunities

IH announced upcoming workshops available to students, plus the upcoming Course Rep Christmas event on 12/12/18.

IH announced that the Alumni office are offering volunteer opportunities to students.