

Course Rep Forum Minutes

**TUESDAY 12TH FEBRUARY 2019,
MEETING ROOM 1, STUDENT CENTRAL, 5pm.**

**WEDNESDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2019,
MEETING ROOM 1, STUDENT CENTRAL, 1pm.**

**TUESDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2019,
ONLINE, CANVAS, 7.30pm.**

Introduction

IH welcomes Reps to the room and introduces the Agenda.

Michelle Anderson, University Librarian (MA)

MA thanks Reps for inviting her. She expressed a desire to get feedback from students on the library. She asked students to do a five minute ice breaker – they should write a love letter or break up letter to the library. If their feelings are mixed they should show the library tough love and write a mixed letter.

Reps complete the task and MA collected the letters in. She took questions from the room.

MA to collect the letters in at the end. Offers to answer questions now.

- *One Rep asked about students which have booked rooms and don't turn up. Asks if library can monitor this.*
 - o *MA answer – if don't turn up in 10 mins then free. A Rep stated that this currently only happened after half an hour. MA said she would look to change this.*
 - o *Another Rep noted that can only book for a full hour but some meetings start at half an hour. MA said she would look to change this.*
- *Another Rep complained about not having enough printer credit. They asked to have either more printer credit or more access to high demand books.*
 - o *MA points to IH success with printing proposal. Now each student gets £20. IH told the Reps that the video announcing this success had been filmed and to be announced to student body this week.*
 - o *MA expanded by detailing how students could have more books ordered. If there is a big queue for books the system just orders more. She also stated there was a generous 'student voice budget': students can request books and library buy them.*
- *Another Rep complained that lecturers and library were not always linked up. Books on reading lists were not always available in the library.*
 - o *MA answered these links were in place and the library had hired a member of staff to make this more streamlined.*
- *A Rep asked about access to journals and stated some were not available to download. As they are dyslexic this means their software – which reads out text – can't work and they cannot highlight text.*
 - o *MA acknowledged that this degrades the student experience. This is because of digital rights management – not all publishers have the same rights regarding printing and downloads. She stated that the library tries to negotiate to get best digital rights or refuse to buy from publishers with limited digital rights. No easy solution to this but library will keep asking for more from publishers.*

- Another Rep commented on sockets in the library which aren't working. MA answered that ones built into furniture degrade quite quickly. If a student finds one that doesn't work they can report it and it will be placed on a maintenance list.
 - Another Rep commented on how annoying it is when someone else in the lift has pressed all the floors.
 - o MA answered that the library is currently bidding for funds to have all lifts replaced and have modern lifts. These lifts will be quicker and everyone pressing every floor won't have such a big impact.
 - Another Rep commented that lifts are narrow and difficult to use with wheelchairs. They asked whether new lifts could be wider.
 - o MA acknowledged this is a problem, particularly with wide chairs. If the lifts were installed now, they wouldn't meet current accessibility standards.
-
- One rep stated that the webchat was really helpful especially when in the middle of an assignment. They praised the fact that they don't need to break away and ring up. They referred to the helpful responses they had received in relation to accessing resources etc. They also said that staff level was 'just right'.
 - o MA stated that this pleased as library wanted to try and get 'more feet on the ground' in the library who are visible and accessible. The Rep echoed this and said they were friendly and knowledgeable.
 - One Rep asked about the rooms not being available. They asked if these could be freed up if people didn't use them.
 - o MA said she was asked this in the previous evening's meeting (12/03/19). MA offered suggestions: waiting time could be reduced 10 or 15 minutes. Alternatively, people could be allowed to book rooms for every half hour. MA highlighted rooms can be booked at help points, websites and through phones.
 - One Rep asked was there a way of showing differentiation between different bookings.
 - o MA said she was not sure if this is visible to Reps but will look into this.
 - o MA also highlighted that Reps can cancel and change rooms if they finish with the room sooner than expected.
 - One Rep asked if PGTs could have access to PG research longue.
 - o MA stated this issue is currently under discussion with PVC research; Isobel and Estates. She stated that there was not enough space in all PGs in the longue. She is looking at the possibility of turning the silent study space into a space for PGT students. MA will feed back through IH on the outcome of this.
 - One Rep stated that library staff have helped with problems with assignments and that they deserve credit.
 - o MA echo this and stated that any assumption that all students who enter library knowledgeable how to access resources is false. She stated that want staff to emphasise there are no silly questions and staff are there to help.
 - One Rep asked for more quiet spaces and better signage about this. They suggested that they didn't know the second floor reading room was a silent study area.
 - o MA highlighted that quiet spaces are actually harder to maintain than silent study space. She suggested they were looking at making a tower floor silent but stated that individuals identify with certain floors, e.g. science subjects with the third floor, so this is difficult without disrupting certain students.
 - One Rep suggested that they didn't need silence but drew attention to problems with phones ringing and being answered in the working spaces. They also stated that they really enjoyed the skills sessions

which are put on but it's hard to access information about these sessions. They suggested an email might be helpful.

- MA mentioned that you can sign up to a newsletter about skills sessions but said she would take this issue back to staff in the skills team.

Objectives

IH updated Reps on her objectives and activities.

She is currently focusing on placement travel expenses. There is no consistent policy across the university. IH is working with head of careers to put together a policy on placement costs.

IH is also working on postgraduate space. She is writing up a report and will submit it to PGT working group and the PVC education.

IH mentioned her new video updates on social media. In one of these, she collaborated with the Advice Centre to make information about mitigating circumstances more widely known.

IH talked about her efforts to improve the representation of HYMS students and their appeals process.

IH told Reps she is also on a PGT working group to help improve the taught experience.

IH stated she is gathering feedback from languages students and alumni.

IH is writing a report on assessment and feedback at the university.

A Rep asked if the mitigating circumstances was only on Facebook. They suggested it might go somewhere else – such as the Union website – to spread this information more widely.

Academic Representation Review Workshop

IH stated that she is trying to improve the system of academic representation at this university. Only $\frac{1}{2}$ of students are aware of who their Rep is and only $\frac{1}{4}$ know what they've done. This is a shame are Reps do amazing work.

IH stated she is consulting with staff, students and Reps to improve this system. She hopes to finish in April in time for Academic Rep recruitment so everyone is ready to go in September.

IH point at three large pieces of paper on wall and ask Reps to write their answers to the questions on post-its and place on the wall.

After the task was completed, IH invited feedback from Reps.

- One Rep stated that it was frustrating that there was limited communication between the Union and staff. They stated that staff didn't see the Union as source of info. They suggested SSFs work well.
- One Rep stated that students don't have to go to anything apart from academic lectures. They suggested that because students don't have to go to Union, not a lot of info reaches them. They suggested some staff don't communicate why Reps are important or show enthusiasm about the process, which hampers recruitment.
- One Rep stated that professors who briefed him about being a Rep were enthusiastic and informative.

- Another Rep stated that they became a Rep because there was no Rep last year. They stated that they didn't know what a Rep was until problems caused by the UCU strikes.
- Another Rep stated that in screen staff don't publicise and that SSFs are organised poorly e.g. during middle of seminars which the head of screen was organising.
- Another Rep stated that many students become course reps because they are passionate about subject and want to improve experience for students. They suggested that students don't care or know what Reps do. The wider student body demands that Reps change things which are beyond a Rep's remit and show a lack of understanding about what Reps do. They mentioned promotional activities like Chocolate and Chat and social media, but said it was hard to know what to do beyond this.
- IH asked Reps what they think about SSFS. One Rep said they do work. Another agreed, stating it was a chance to sit down together with staff. Another Rep suggested that a lot of issues and the key staff member wasn't there so issues couldn't be addressed.
- One Rep (FSE) suggested that SSFs were useful if a Rep was raising a general issue. They said it was harder if the issue concerned someone who was in the room. They said this could be stressful for Reps, especially if the feedback didn't reflect their view. They said they didn't want their face to be associated with bad feedback.
 - o Another Rep said they helped to overcome this problem by reading out anonymous comments which had been gathered on social media.
- Another Rep in Chemistry said that staff can appreciate being told what can be improved on courses even in more confrontational meetings. They suggested staff appreciate feedback especially when solutions are offered.
- IH asked about separating PG and UG meetings. One Rep stated she was the only PG in subject specific meetings. Opinion about a PG specific forum at Faculty level was positive, but PG Reps suggested they still wanted the chance to air subject specific issues with UG students.
- Another Rep mentioned that SSFs often run out of time Things are raised but not everything always fully covered even though many issues are resolved. This means that some issues fall by the wayside.

- IH asked how can we do this better?
- One Rep suggested student feedback to Reps could be made easier perhaps online or via Canvas to try and make feedback more direct and eliminate intermediary.
- Another Rep suggested that meetings could be longer issues could be submitted in advance to save time in meetings and resolve issues in SSFs.
- Another Rep suggested that SSFs should be more about feeding back on the resolution of issues, rather than being a space to raise issues for the first time.
- One Rep agreed that there was a need for a better relationship with staff. They noted that some staff see feedback as personal opinion of Rep rather than being representative of a cohort.
- Another Rep asked for a longer running action register rather than updating it each year as some issues are continuous year on year.
- Another Rep suggested a weekly meeting with whole third year. This would emphasise the fact that issues raised were not just the views of Course Reps, but feedback from the whole cohort.

- One Rep asked if there was a way of seeing where the gaps are and representing these students. FT clarified that this list does exist but there wasn't currently a way of students representing those in different subjects.

- Another Rep stated that it was frustrating that when they made an attempt to collect feedback people were not always willing to provide it.
 - One Rep stated that collecting feedback was difficult for nursing reps as not all students are on campus at the same time.
 - One Rep suggested there was a lot of 'moaning' from students but no constructive comments.
 - One Rep asked when people were unwilling to give feedback – was this younger students? They suggested in English it was all students. They tried post it notes and asked if a form might help in eliciting more feedback.
-
- IH asked how could we improve the system or make it better.
 - A Rep suggested that send an email in the department with contact details on.
 - Another Rep asked if the Union could do shout outs? One Rep suggested this would be really helpful.
 - IH ask about SSFs. Overall comments concerned how few SSFs were actually held and that only a handful of Reps attended when they were held. .
 - A Rep suggested all students should be able to attend SSFs. One Rep suggested they could come as an observer not a participant. Another Rep suggested this might be unworkable if there is a large cohort.
 - A Rep in English stated their SSF went well – it was a small meeting but a productive one. They suggested that the agenda could be sent to everyone. They also suggested that the action register be publicised more widely in Hub or similar.
-
- A PGT student suggested that SSFs were catered more towards UG students. IH suggested separated but Rep replied that UGs in SSFs might block changes which would benefit PGs. They thoughts a Faculty PG forum – held in addition to an UG forum – might work.

Let's Talk About Canvas

This issue was raised because this is something the new PVC Education want to raise. IH told Reps that the PVC Education has invited senior staff and student reps (including course reps) to a half away day about canvas. IH invite course reps to come if they are interested in having their say on Canvas.

One Rep from Accounting asked about better access to Panopto. IH gave an update: problems linking Panopto with Canvas with timetable but this is a live issue which is being discussed and resolved at the moment. Currently lecturers can upload and record their lectures but aim is to have it uploaded automatically. The Rep asked if more training and support could be given to lecturers in using Panopto. Some might not want to do it, but can they help those who have technical issues.

General Questions and Discussion

IH invite general questions

- One Rep had two issues. A friend who is a Course Rep who can't make Tuesday nights or Wednesday lunchtime. IH noted that the online ones are recorded and can be played back. She stated that it was difficult to accommodate everyone. IH said she would look at a possible change to a different time.

- Another Rep stated that Zest in AMB meant to be vegan but don't have soya milk.
- One Rep stated that Wilberforce car park has spaces but barriers won't raise so people are missing lectures.
- Another Rep asked: "Why are timetables the way they are?" IH noted that it is an old system which has problems linking with the iHull app. This meant that iHull app was out of date. Uni looking to get a new software.
- One Rep asked how to get a room change because not enough chairs. IH said go to ML. ML has tried this and been denied. Said enough seats but not accessible if people are recorded. IH if can't be sorted by ML need to escalate to next level.
- Another Rep asked how many hours can be timetabled in a row as a student has six hours together. IH suggested raising the issue with the faculty.
- One Rep asked if exam timetables could be released sooner to accommodate people with commitments such as jobs, children. IH said she would follow this up.
- Another Rep noted that some rooms not accessible and that this was a bigger problem in Ferens than AMB. They said they could park up a wheelchair but there is nowhere to put a laptop. IH suggested that they take this up in their SSF and raise the issue with the Module Leader. This Rep suggested that all lecture theatres should be equipped with accessible tables.
- One Rep commented on AMB lecture theatre one and said that the chairs are unstable. IH said she would follow this up.

- A Rep noted there are still issues with automatically registering attendance.
- Another Rep suggested that group work was being made more difficult as students were told not to use social media. They asked for another option. IH suggested Canvas chat. A different Rep suggested that lecturers can place students into study groups so they can chat privately.
- One Rep asked if they can have access to the logo. FT to upload this the Hull University Union logo and the partnership logo to Canvas.
- One Rep asked about timetabling. IH discussed the issues syncing timetabling with iHull app and they have moved to the old system. There is a way of linking this up with your google account, but IH warned this isn't officially endorsed or supported by the University. Timetabling are working on the issues and expect to resolve them in the coming year.