

# Course Rep Forum 1: Minutes

*Meeting Room 1, Hull University Union, 30/10/2018*

**Training Room 3, Brynmor Jones Library, 31/10/2018**

Online Forum, Canvas and Facebook Live, 06/11/2018

## 1. Welcome from the Education Officer (Chair)

Isobel Hall introduced herself opened with an icebreaker which involved reps introducing themselves to one another. IH outlined the purpose of the forum and how it was different from a Student Staff Forum (SSF). IH stated the course rep forum allowed reps to network, share ideas and discuss university wide issues such as timetabling. IH informed the reps she would be meeting with the registrar to discuss timetabling on Friday.

IH outlined the agenda: the reps will learn more about Hull University Union (HUU), discuss communication, consider wider Higher Education (HE) issues and discuss timetabling.

## 2. Education Zone

IH introduced the Education Zone and informed the reps they were part of this Zone. She ran over all the other roles in the Zone, informed the reps the Zone met each week and talked about university wide issues.

*On 30/10/18 two members of the Zone were present. Sanaa Sabir, the Faculty Rep for the Faculty of Science and Engineering (FSE), outlined her campaign to improve student experience. Lee Pearson, one of the scrutiny officers, informed the reps of his plans to look at timetabling issues.*

On 06/11/2018, several reps commented they didn't know who their subject rep was.

IH outlined her objectives as the President of Education, focusing on printing, a greater partnership between the university and students, and amplifying the postgraduate voice.

**PRINTING:** IH informed the reps of her petition on the topic. IH outlined research she'd conducted on the printing provision of 19 universities. Hull was ranked 18<sup>th</sup>. The top three universities in this ranking offered free printing. IH noted a yearly allowance of around £20 was common. IH emphasised the importance of showing student support for this initiative. IH informed the reps she'll take this petition, along with a proposal, to senior management with the aims of increasing the yearly printing allowance provided for students.

**PARTNERSHIP:** IH stated the Code of Practice requires the University to promote the Course Rep system. IH informed the reps she wanted to improve this partnership. IH referred to the Student Charter, which was last signed in 2012. IH stated she is the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) representative for the University and expressed a desire to include rep's voices in the submissions the University makes.

**POSTGRADUATES:** IH stated that the postgraduate community needs a voice, but suggested they currently didn't have one. IH outlined postgraduate specific issues she is working on: improving postgraduate spaces and helping this group feel part of the student community.

*On 30/10/2018, IH informed the reps that TED talks will be coming to the University in 2019.*

**On 31/10/2018 a rep asked what would happen if IH's printing proposal failed. IH stated that senior management were positive about the idea and suggested that –**

**with the support of the students through the petition – she had a strong case. IH told the reps if it did fail they would need to regroup at that stage.**

On 06/11/2018, reps suggested several ideas for rewards including hoodies, T-shirts, CV improvement and purple lanyards. Another rep suggested training in 'managing difficult conversation might be helpful'.

On 06/11/2018, a rep asked why the university was in deficit.

### 3. The Student Voice

IH introduced an activity. IH handed out a series of cards with statements regarding activities which fall under the remit of Academic Reps. IH asked the reps to sort the cards into piles relating to activities currently done well, less well and badly. The cards were colour coded to represent activities conducted at different levels: as an information provider, an actor, an expert and a partner.

*On 30/11/2018, the majority of groups agreed that currently reps work well as information providers, but less well as experts or partners. One rep noted that reps don't consider themselves experts.*

*One rep then stated that the university worked on a business timetable which aimed to get back to students in too long a timeframe. An example was provided: it might take a staff member two weeks to reply to a query about an essay. If the essay was due in three weeks this is too long.*

**On 31/11/2018, the groups differed. Two groups suggested currently the reps work most effectively as partners; one group believed reps work most effectively as actors; two groups believed reps work most effectively as information providers.**

### 4. Campaign Funding

IH asked the reps if they knew they could run campaigns and receive money to support this from HUU. Very few reps were aware of this.

*On 30/10/2018, one rep said a lecturer had encouraged students to approach the Union and campaign to fund an educational trip.*

IH asked reps to share ideas of campaigns they might run. For example, engineering still required paper submissions. IH suggested a campaign for online submissions was a possibility reps might want to consider.


*On 30/10/2018, one rep wanted to bring a specific speaker to the university; another wanted more varied guest speakers; a third wanted to teach more people to use the Bloomberg Suite.*

**On 31/10/2018, one rep suggested running a campaign to reduce the amount of material students print.**

On 06/11/18, one rep suggested hubs needed better communication. Another suggested that the lack of continuous academic feedback was a problem.

IH highlighted other benefits of running a campaign, for example the experience gained managing money.

As an Academic Rep, IH wanted to renovate the Larkin Area in the Faculty of Arts, Culture and Education (FACE) and run a 'degree-plus' event which focused more on careers. IH ran a survey which got between 80 and 90 results showing demand for this. IH worked with HUU



and careers to create the 'Life and Literature' festival. This event brought in people from the BBC, Hull Truck Theatre and other places. A 'Booze and Books' event was sponsored by Waterstones. As a result of the success of this event, FACE are now running more careers events including a 'futures week'. The Larkin Area has also been renovated.

## 5. Communication

IH asked the reps about the challenges of being an undergraduate or postgraduate when communicating with staff.

*On 30/10/2018, reps emphasised the benefits of face to face communication. They highlighted problems with accessibility of staff. One rep suggested that postgraduates were not always aware who staff were. Another rep stated that staff don't appreciate students' perspectives and provided an example: a technical error meant grades were calculated incorrectly. They were told 'it was only 5%'. The rep referred to the importance of getting a good grade in a degree and the fees students are paying.*

**On 31/10/2018, reps focused on the possibilities to contact staff in office hours and after lectures. They suggested it was hard to track down staff outside of these times and stated they might wait a long time for a reply to an email.**

IH outlined the principles of effective feedback, which should be accurate, balanced, constructive and depersonalised.

IH asked the reps about communication with students.

*On the 30/10/2018, one rep suggested that leaving the initiative with peers was a problem. Other reps suggested that casual conversations were productive. Another rep suggested that in more open departments lecturers were directly approached, bypassing the Academic Representation system.*

**On 31/10/2018, reps emphasised the benefits of approaching students in labs, core modules and lectures.**

IH then asked students what they might learn from one another.

Both groups stated they could share ideas on talking to students and how to deal with common problems.

**On 31/10/2018, IH asked the reps what they wanted from the Union. Reps wanted HUU to publicise course reps more; communicate more about issues and what was being done; and more clarity on what happens with feedback.**

## 6. Timetabling


IH instructed reps to discuss and write down their issues with timetabling. IH told the reps she will take this feedback to her meeting with the Registrar on Friday. IH encouraged reps to send her any further timetabling issues by Friday.

On 06/11/2018, several timetabling issues were raised in comments. These included concerns about the iHull app; the sudden changes in timetabling; 'ghost' lectures; and postgraduate specific timetabling issues.

IH postponed a discussion of Higher Education issues until the next meeting.

On 06/11/18, IH asked the reps for their views on general issues. They fed back on the following issues:

- IH to write a blog about faculty hubs.

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- More information on how to set up a referendum
  - More advertising about union services
  - Halal food options
  - More quiet places to work
  - More email space
  - More ways to find what's happening in the HUU and uni
  - Link to the strike wages
  - Drop in presentation about what a course rep is

On 06/11/18, Reps suggested the following topics for the next meeting:

- Academic Feedback
- Hubs
- Joint Honours

Other reps suggested they'd prefer a meeting with no theme.

## 7. Post-its

IH handed out post-it notes and encouraged reps to write down something they were proud of. Permission to share these statements was provided by reps.