

Notes of the StARs Forum - Thursday 10th April 2014

12:30 – 14:00 (CC004)

Topic: Deadlines and Surveys

Present:

Tom Clarke - **TC** (Vice President Education)

John Ryan – **JR** (Pro Vice Chancellor (Students))

Caryn Thorogood – **CT** (Head of Student Services)

Heather Barrett – **HB** (Curriculum 2013 and Worcester Weeks Coordinator)

Wesley Hudson – **WH** (SU President elect)

Ruth Christie – **RC** Membership Services Manager (taking notes)

StARs present: Roxandra Maria Crisan, Education Studies; Lauren Adams, Sports Studies; Kalin Delev, Business, Accountancy & Economics; Klaudiya Kuyovich, Psychology; Joseph Hayes, History; Stephanie Johnston, Business, HR management and PR; Michael Megginson, Sports Studies; Kerry Willoughby, Outdoor Adventure Leadership and Management; Sophie Aumeer, Primary Initial Teacher Education; Amy Reid, Film Studies/Screenwriting; Diane Noble, Creative Digital Media; Hollie Fox, Journalism; Emily Bates, Film Studies; Andreea Pascale, Human Nutrition; Sherry Kiani, Human Biology; Ellen Joyce, Human Nutrition; Christina Weaver, Integrated Working with Children and Families; Charlotte Goss, Geography; Ben Norris, Business Management

Also in attendance: Lesley Spiers – **LS** (StAR Coordinator Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts) Joy Carroll - **JC** (StAR Coordinator Institute of Education)

Welcome and introductions: TC welcomed everyone to the final StARs Forum of the academic year. Members of the panel introduced themselves.

Deadlines: Tom reminded StARs that Friday 11th April is the deadline for:

- V-records to be handed in by students wanting to attend the VoScAs
- Applications for StAR accreditation
- Applications to be a student trustee of Worcester Students' Union
- Nominations for the Student-Led Teaching Awards

He also pointed out that the deadline for applications to be an Institute Rep for 2014-15 is Thursday 17th April.

Celebration Week

TC drew attention to the fact that week commencing Monday 5th May is Celebration Week, with the VoScAs on Tuesday 6th May at the Cricket Club, the Colours Ball on Wednesday 7th May at the Bank House Hotel, the Worcester Award ceremony on Thursday 8th May at the Arena and the Student-Led Teaching Awards and StAR accreditation awards on the afternoon of Friday 9th May at the Arena.

Surveys

TC reminded StARs that the National Student Survey (NSS) closes on Wednesday 30th April. The University's internal student survey will now remain open until Friday 9th May. Response rates are currently disappointing and no Institute is close to the 65% target. Current response rates are:

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| Institute of Education | 52.31% |
| Institute of Health and Society | 22.33% |
| Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts | 15.67% |
| Institute of Science and the Environment | 20.18% |
| Institute of Sport and Exercise Science | 14.95% |
| Worcester Business School | 18.59% |

Thanks

TC thanked all students who have been active StARs this year for their hard work and commitment and wished all those in their final year of study good luck in the future.

Questions and comments from StARs

TC invited StARs to air any issues of concern or interest to the students they represent.

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| Kalin asked for an update on the question of the introduction of printing credit for students | |
| Klaudiya wants to raise awareness that the University has an allotment, which students and staff are very welcome to get involved with. Students can grow fruit and vegetables – its | <p>For more information, see http://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/university-allotment.html</p> <p>The allotment is near the Severn Gate, adjoining 159-161 Henwick Grove</p> |

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| good fun and productive too. | |
| Ben said that there are still issues with the Business Challenge module, both in terms of the structure of the course and the way in which it's delivered. | JC asked whether these concerns had been raised at the Course Management Committee – Ben said that they were not and he regrets that he did not raise them. |
| Ben and Kalin both mentioned continuing dissatisfaction with group work, when some students contribute little, if anything, but benefit from the hard work done by other students. | JC said that Will Bowen-Jones (Head of Educational Development Unit) is talking to each Institute's teaching and learning leads about this issue. John encouraged StARs to continue to raise these concerns with module leaders. |
| Ellen explained that biosciences students have an issue with timetabling for 2014-15 as evening sessions are to be introduced, but the timetable won't be confirmed until July. Around three-quarters of students are mature and many have work and family commitments which will make these changes very difficult to accommodate. It will be a problem for commuting students, too, as public transport to some destinations finishes before 9pm | <p>JC said that the timetabling day is 9am to 9pm, even though biosciences may be used to a teaching day that finishes at 6pm. Lesley pointed out that new timetable slots might not follow previous patterns e.g. there will be 4pm – 8pm sessions. In sociology, there will be a 16:15 – 19:15 session.</p> <p>JC acknowledged that there are many discussions currently within ISE concerning timetabling and Heather will feed in students' comments.</p> |
| Roxandra said that a number of students in Education Studies have had problems accessing the support they need for their independent studies, but have not been able to change tutors. They have no choice of supervisor as | <p>JC said that guidance and entitlements relating to support for independent studies is set out. StARs should encourage students who are unhappy to go to their independent study co-ordinator.</p> <p>It is important that students express their concerns and that StARs raise these issues, but it is not always possible for key staff within a subject area to supervise all students</p> |

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| <p>the supervisor has to be someone with a particular qualification. Many students would prefer an approachable tutor rather than a better qualified tutor who does not respond.</p> | <p>undertaking independent studies when cohorts are large.</p> |
| <p>Feedback and update on Worcester Weeks</p> <p>Heather reported that a lot of feedback from students and staff has been received and a report was presented to the University executive (made up of senior staff and heads of Institute) recently. The main message was concerns about the number and timing of Worcester Weeks. Communication was also highlighted as a key issue. Students want to be more involved with the planning and staff would welcome this. Students would also like to see more cross-university activities as these were particularly well received.</p> <p>It should be recognised that Worcester Weeks were introduced for the first time this year, so it will be difficult to introduce radical changes for next year. 2014-15 Worcester Weeks are still under discussion and Heather will continue to liaise with the leads from each Institute.</p> | |
| <p>Kalin asked whether it would be possible for a group of StARs to input into the development of Worcester Weeks for next year.</p> | <p>JC said that the University executive has had feedback that students want to be more involved and there will be further discussions on 23rd April. JC will reinforce to heads of Institute the fact that StARs are willing partners.</p> |
| <p>Heather said that there's recognition that lots of students felt that the second Worcester Week clashed with assignment demands. Tutors would welcome dialogue with StARs.</p> | <p>Ben said that WBS students have already received an email from Sarah Pittaway (ILS), inviting students to participate in discussions about next year's Worcester Weeks. Joe said that he has also received this email, so it is not confined to WBS students.</p> <p>Other StARs confirmed that IHCA has already established a group which is working with ILS in relation to Worcester Weeks, as has ISES.</p> <p>JC commented that these initiatives are a recognition of the success of StARs Forums in achieving greater student participation in their learning.</p> |

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| | <p>Joe said that IHCA are planning to hold a TEDx event (Technology, Entertainment, Design) as part of a Worcester Week next year. This will be cross-curriculum with a range of external speakers.</p> <p>Ben said that the workshops on report and essay-writing had good feedback from WBS students. The Institute-specific careers workshops were very good too and the events with external speakers were very popular.</p> <p>Joe added that the talk on Jack the Ripper, the talk from the holocaust survivor and the visit to the slavery museum were all very popular.</p> |
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Additional written comments from StARs

- Our Institute leader promised, in a course management committee, that we would have a talk from an industry professional which is relevant for us, yet we didn't (Screenwriting). I would like to note that animation/illustration have so many guest speakers it seems unfair as at my time at Uni I haven't seen one
- Everything I have attended during Worcester Weeks has been great (trip to London, talk from an award-winning advertiser etc) but nobody's interested. I think it's important to include students more but also allow tutors/lecturers to make them relevant to their modules. They need to be better advertised – I don't know what happened during the 2nd and 3rd Worcester Weeks!

Feedback and update on Turnitin

Kelsey Coward was unable to attend the Forum, but she sent this update:

A new policy on the use of Turnitin is to be implemented for September 2014. The key points of the policy are:

- The focus of using Turnitin within the University will be on using it as a learning and teaching tool.
- All level 4 students will be able to submit formative assessments through Turnitin to check their source use, and academic writing, before submission. They will be able to submit as many times as they wish: this

should assist students in checking their work and making corrections, as necessary. The originality reports are for students' use only (not to be part of the actual submission process.)

- The e-learning team and the Student Transition and Progression Officer will produce information (probably short 2 min. videos) on using Turnitin, interpreting Originality Reports and source use and referencing.
- At some point during their 1st year, students will be asked to take one of their originality reports to a meeting with their Academic Tutor. This will allow an opportunity for students to raise any concerns/issues regarding referencing and source use. It will also ensure that tutors have discussed the topic with students at least once during their first year (this meeting will be documented as having taken place.)
- Staff will only use Turnitin if they suspect plagiarism. If this happens the student would be notified by the tutor

JC invited comments and questions from StARs

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| <p>Stephanie said she thinks Turnitin is really good and feels students should have to use it for all their assignments. She pointed out that the Business School already have videos showing students how to use it.</p> | <p>JC said it is important that students use Turnitin effectively. Videos will be produced specifically for University of Worcester students.</p> |
| <p>Lauren asked if a University-wide originality score is to be introduced.</p> | <p>John replied that a percentage score is not enough in itself to show that there is a problem – it depends on the nature of the matches and the areas where matches are found. There needs to be fairness, but there should also be a cut-off point.</p> |
| <p>Charlotte asked whether anonymous marking concerns are being addressed. In biology, the login is the student's number, whereas in geography, it is the student's name.</p> | <p>JC said he would follow up this question with Kelsey, who is working on the new policy with Libby Symonds.</p> |

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| <p>Kalin suggested that Turnitin should be explained to students during induction week, so they understand it from the start.</p> | <p>JC said that new students have such a lot of information to take in when they start their courses that it might be too early to cover Turnitin during induction week.</p> <p>It is important, though, that students do understand it before they have to submit their first assignment.</p> <p>It is a tool, not a "bible" and students need to use Turnitin within a framework. It is a means of checking that you have done what you should have done.</p> |
| <p>Ben said that the Marketing and Management module outline states that failure to use Turnitin would result in a student's work not being graded.</p> | <p>JC said that all heads of Institute were written to in January to ensure that this rule is no longer applied – there is no general regulation that a student can be failed if they do not submit a Turnitin report.</p> |
| <p>Lauren asked how effective it is as a learning tool when reports take 24 hours.</p> | <p>Ellen suggested that turnaround time depends on the time of day – it is slower when America is awake.</p> |
| <p>Christina said she's never heard of Turnitin and wondered if she should have.</p> | <p>JC said that it can be a useful tool for students on any course – all students can register on the UK site. The University's current guidance can be found here http://www.worc.ac.uk/elearning/668.htm</p> |
| | <p>John also explained that the University understands and is seeking to address "learner incompetence", which is when a student's work is flagged by Turnitin but, rather than cheating through plagiarism, a student has not understood how to reference properly.</p> <p>Kelsey is working on an online module that will be generally available, which should help prevent instances of learner incompetence.</p> |
| <p><u>Additional written comments from StARs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm a third year and I've never been told to use it – I don't even know how you do it – may need to explain to freshers | |

- Some tutors are less likely to advertise Turnitin, as they can feel students can sometimes use this tool to find ways to get away with plagiarism, with slightly tweaking work after the initial Turnitin report

Printer credit

JC noted that Wes had mentioned this in his manifesto. It's unlikely that the University will be able to introduce free printing credit for students in 2014-15, but the Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor have accepted the proposal in principle.

It is hoped that students will be allocated printer credit from 2015-16, but this will be discussed further at University executive.

Consideration will need to be given to whether a flat rate amount for all students is appropriate, or whether the amount of credit should be tailored to take account of the demands of particular courses.

Finance booklet

Caryn reported that she and Susan Richardson (Senior Welfare and Financial Adviser) met with a small group of StARs to discuss revisions to the Financial Information & Support booklet. The current version can be found here http://www.worc.ac.uk/wfa/documents/Finance_Book_2013_PDF.pdf

It's recognised that ensuring this information reaches students at the appropriate time continues to be a challenge, but one suggestion which will be put into action is to include the booklets in all Open Day packs. The information will be updated and gaps filled and Student Services will talk to course leaders to get clearer information on course costs such as the printing of posters, mandatory outings etc.

Induction/Freshers' Week

Kalin reported that he has recently attended an interview for a position as a "smoke-free" advisor. If the University was to ban smoking on campus from 2015, then potential students should be made known of this

JC said that it is not yet certain that the University will become a completely smoke-free campus by 2015, but he agreed that, should this happen, it would need to be made clear to potential future students as well as current students.

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| <p>Joint honours students had difficulties during induction week due to clashes of induction talks. It is particularly difficult to know which ones to attend when some timetables are much more detailed than others are.</p> <p>Some sessions are mandatory so, for instance, a student had to miss a geography field trip in order to attend a mandatory sports induction session.</p> <p>The session put on exclusively for joint honours students was really good and provided an opportunity to meet other JH students</p> | <p>Ellen explained that she is one of the students on the joint honours forum with Ann Jordan (the staff member with particular responsibility for developing support for joint honours students).</p> <p>Ellen said they welcome feedback and are always looking for more students to join the forum. Ellen invited any StARs who might be interested to talk to her after the StARs Forum.</p> <p>Ellen can be contacted via email if anyone has additional comments or would like to get involved with the JH Forum</p> |
| <p>Lauren said that there are lots of talks about referencing and using the library during induction week, but it's too early for students to take all this in.</p> | <p>JC agreed that timing is very important. He felt that there needs to be an introduction to these topics during induction week, but later reinforcement is essential</p> |
| <p>Charlotte pointed out that on a lot of courses, there's a lot of segregation between students in different years of study. Whole course events during induction week would be really good.</p> | <p>JC suggested that having more academic societies would help to bring students from different years together and societies could be encouraged to organise events during induction week.</p> <p>First-year students on the Outdoor Adventure Leadership and Management course are allocated second-year mentors, which works really well</p> |
| <p>Top-up students miss out as they do not have a Fresher's Week – they just</p> | <p>JC checked that top-up students are invited to Fresher's Week, which they are.</p> |

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| <p>have a day's induction. There are around 70 students on the mandatory module and they feel that one day is not enough. The University shouldn't be frightened about overloading students with information and activities – they'd prefer to have a more extensive induction. The course leader has agreed that some changes will be made, which should help.</p> | |
| <p>Tuition fee increases</p> <p>A number of StARs commented that the increase in tuition fees for 2014-15 is in very small print and has been introduced without any notice to students.</p> | <p>JC was not aware that students had already been notified about fees for next year, but he confirmed that the new figures represent an inflationary increase.</p> |