

Notes of the Course Rep Forum – Tuesday 5th December 2017

12:45-14:15 (EEG087)

Topic: Timetabling and Module Selection

In Attendance:

Chair: Euan Morrison (EM, VP Education)

Panel: Ross Renton (RR, Pro Vice Chancellor), Kevin Pickess (KP, Academic Registrar - Timetabling), Lesley Spiers (LS, Senior Lecturer in Sociology - Module Selection)

Also in attendance: 28 Course Reps, Tim Hewes-Belton (THB, Student Engagement Manager), Jodie Stilgoe (JS, Student Voice Assistant - minute taking)

Minutes:

1.	Welcome and introduction (EM) EM welcomed everyone to the second forum of the academic year
2.	Academic Representation Update (EM)
2.1	Student Engagement and Representation Working Group The SU (THB and EM) and the University (RR, Simone Clarke, Richard White and Val Yates) have been working closely together to review the academic representation system. EM explained that the group are currently conducting a mapping exercise to tally all Rep meetings in each Institute. The group are also drafting ideas for an ideal academic representation framework model. Each Institute (Institute Reps and their Academic Rep Coordinators) have been asked to benchmark their Institute against TSEP's academic representation benchmarking tool. Following this exercise, the SU will be able to see what actions need to be taken to improve academic representation.
2.2	Institute Rep Recruitment There is still one Institute Rep position available – the Institute of Health and Society's Nursing Rep. If Course Reps are interested in becoming an IHS Nursing Institute Rep, they can apply via the Students' Union website .
2.3	Course Rep Training Training sessions have been delivered at partner colleges as well as on campus. For Course Reps who have not yet attended a training session, the Students' Union will be holding two more generic sessions

	<p>this month on Friday 8th (at 14:30-15:30 in EEG131) and on Wednesday 13th (at 13:15-14:15 in BYG196).</p> <p>2.4 Feedback</p> <p>The SU are hosting four Out and About sessions on two topics: course feedback and Course Reps. At these stalls, students will be able to give anonymous course feedback, and they will be able to find out who their Course Rep is.</p> <p>EM explained that Reps should continue to update their online Rep Journals. So far, the SU have seen a range of positive feedback (such as Welcome Week activities) and negative feedback (such as evening lectures). Course Leaders have taken this information on-board.</p>
3.	<p>Updates from Pro Vice Chancellor (RR)</p> <p>The University expects that the new University Art House at City Campus should be opening in September 2018.</p> <p>The University have submitted a bid with the Higher Education Funding Council for the Medical School.</p> <p>RR explained that he has been liaising with EM on the subject of improving student communications. They will be using Reps to help with this communication process.</p> <p>RR gave an overview on the Office for Students, the new regulator for the Higher Education sector. The Office for Students has a particular focus on the student experience. The Department for Education is conducting a consultation on behalf of the Office for Students and the University will be submitting a response.</p>
4.	<p>Timetabling (KP)</p> <p>KP introduced the Registry Services department and explained that the department covers a range of different areas such as results, council tax certificates and the SOLE page. One specific area of the department is timetabling.</p> <p>KP explained that every student has a different situation such as a part-time job, child-care responsibility, commuting, etc. It is impossible to create a perfect timetable for every student that suits all specific needs.</p> <p>4.1 'Student Led' Timetabling</p> <p>The University asks students about their module preferences and the Timetabling team arrange a timetable to best suit these choices. This has enabled students to have a genuine choice and helps with managing spaces.</p>

	<p>The department have analysed NSS feedback and found the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Some lectures are too long</u> KP explained that lectures might need to be broken down into several smaller time-slots • <u>Room changes are inconvenient</u> KP explained that there is always scope that rooms will change if lecturers wish to use rooms effectively, such as implementing different activities that requires a different room layout or size. • <u>Keeping Wednesday afternoons free</u> KP explained that, as part of module selection, the department asks students if they are involved in any clubs or societies. For students who are partaking in clubs or societies, the department will try to keep timetabling space for these students on Wednesday afternoons. • <u>Keeping Friday afternoons free</u> KP explained that there is an expectation for full time students to be available throughout the week.
4.2	<p>Publication of timetables</p> <p>KP explained that the department are now asking returning students to select modules early so that the department can collate this data to produce a timetable at the end of July for students and staff.</p>
4.3	<p>Communication</p> <p>Students can see their timetables online and students are able to publish any timetabling issues on SOLE or they can send an email to studenttimetabling@worc.ac.uk for more specific issues.</p>
5.	<p>Module Selection (LS)</p> <p>LS explained that she is responsible for learning and teaching within the Institutes of Humanities and the Arts. Students in the room were given a 'clicker' device to use to answer a series of multiple choice questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is most important when making module choices? The majority of students (41%) answered with "type of assessment" and 32% answered with "Other". When asked what 'Other' might cover, students answered that the overall content of the module and whether they find the material interesting is the most important aspect when considering module choices. 2. What/who is your first point of contact when looking for module information? 23% of students answered "Blackboard" and 23% of students answered "Module Leader". Other answers selected were

	<p>spread across "SOLE", "Course Leader", "Tutor" and "Module Fairs".</p> <p>3. If you wanted further advice, which of the following are you most likely to consult? 36% of students answered "Course Leader" and 23% of students answered "Personal Academic Tutor".</p> <p>4. "I have had plenty of opportunity to discuss module choices with my Personal Academic Tutor (PAT)". 11% strongly agreed with this statement, 37% agreed, 21% disagreed and 32% strongly disagreed. A Joint Honours student pointed out that their PAT might only know about courses relating to their specific field. For example, a student who studies History and Politics may have a Politics PAT who does not know anything about History module choices.</p> <p>5. How effective do you find the selection process on SOLE? The majority of students (35%) answered with "somewhat effective". <i>It is important to note that a large percentage of attendees were first year students and so have not experienced module selection yet.</i></p> <p>6. How important do you feel information on course website or blackboard is in relation to selecting a module? 35% of students answered "Very important" and 40% of students answered "Somewhat important"</p> <p>7. Have you ever attended a module fair/clinic prior to making your module selection? 67% of students answered "No". When students were asked why they have not attended a module fair before, the following concerns were mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two History and Politics students explained that they did not realise there were fairs around module choices. This could be due to lack of advertisement. It might be beneficial to have module choice fairs or stalls during applicant days. • Another History and Politics student explained that if students do not quickly select modules when they become available online, then the module will quickly get filled by other students. Therefore, students might feel that they do not have the time to go to module fairs. • A student from the Institute of Sport and Exercise Science explained that their Institute has module choice videos online which is useful when students are deciding on optional modules. • Another ISES student reported that there were website issues where the system told students that modules were full even
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		<p>though there were still spaces available. KP told the student that the department was aware of this problem and fixed it quickly. The department are currently reviewing how they can make website access easier for first year students.</p> <p>8. If you did go to a Fair/Clinic, did you find it useful? 63% of students found the Module Fair "Very useful".</p> <p>9. Information received from module selection from course leader/team, was timely? 50% of students answered with "strongly agree".</p> <p>10. "Information on module selection on SOLE was accurate". 59% of students selected "Agree", 18% of students selected "Disagree" and 18% of students selected "Strongly disagree." LS advised students to speak to their Course Leader about this if they disagreed with the statement.</p> <p>11. "I understand why it is important to make correct module choice". 43% of students selected "Strongly Agree" and 57% of students selected "Agree" Students fed back that module choices are important because they benefit future careers and it is important to undertake modules that students find enjoyable.</p> <p>LS then asked students a series of open-ended questions:</p> <p>1. When is the best time to provide support around module choices? One student suggested that module selection could be covered at the end of a lecture during the module selection period. Another student suggested that module selection could be talked about during refreshers, after assignments have finished.</p> <p>2. What are the most challenging aspects around module choices? Joint Honours students find it difficult to know which modules are mandatory. Other students explained that there is sometimes not enough choice when choosing modules.</p> <p>3. How do you know which module you should choose at each level of study? Students usually ask their lecturers for guidance. Another student explained that their Course Leader provides them with a "Visual 'path' chart" which they found very useful.</p> <p>4. Does anyone have any suggestions for improvements to the current practice on module guidance for students?</p>
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6.		<p>Questions for the Panel</p> <p>EM invited students to put questions to the Panel.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>An ISES Institute Rep (Sport, Management and Outdoor Education) explained that 3rd year and 2nd year coaching students have evening coaching placements which clash with evening lectures. Is there a possibility for lectures to be moved to the daytime for these students?</u> Students should not have evening lectures more than once a week. KP explained that he will take this information back to his department to see if there is a way to work around coaching placements 2. <u>A Psychology student explained that their cohort is in for just one hour on a Thursday, which is an issue for commuters.</u> KP explained that when they addressed the issue about lecture length, academic staff were asked to break up their lectures into more frequent, shorter blocks. KP explained that the department are aware of this issue and are currently working on solutions. Having said this, the University would prefer full time students to attend University throughout the week so that students can use the resources available to them e.g. the Hive and using study space. 3. <u>A Nursing student explained that her cohort is very large and the students do not always fit inside the lecture theatres. Is this issue being addressed?</u> KP explained that his department are continuously monitoring the usage of rooms. The Facilities and Estates department are also looking to modernise University facilities. 4. <u>An I.H.S student explained that students on her course do not always attend afternoon lectures due to placement clashes or lack of concentration by midday.</u> KP advised the student to feed back this information to her Course Leader. 5. <u>For a BUSM module, students have evening lectures with early morning lectures the following day. This timetable is difficult for commuters.</u>

		<p>KP explained that the University has to expect that full time students are available full time. It is realistic of the University to expect students to attend and engage with their course. KP also highlighted that if students are not happy with their module, they can change modules during the first two weeks of the semester.</p> <p>The department's key principle is to create a clash free timetable.</p>
7.		<p>AOB</p> <p>Course Rep Conference</p> <p>EM made a final note that the Course Rep Conference will be taking place on 6th February 2018.</p>