Notes of the Course Rep Forum – Monday 19th March 2018

12:45-14:15 (EEG089)

Topic: Technology Enhanced Learning

Attendance

Chair: Euan Morrison (EM, Vice President Education)

Panel: Ross Renton (RR, Pro Vice Chancellor), Sarah Greer (SG, Deputy Vice Chancellor), Elizabeth Symonds (ES, Team Leader, Learning and Teaching Technology Unit)

Also present: 16 Course Reps, Tim Hewes-Belton (THB, Student Engagement Manager), Nisha Sharif (NS, Technology Enhanced Learning Advisor), and Jodie Stilgoe (JS, Student Voice Assistant, minute-taker)

Minutes

1.	Introductions
	EM welcomed everyone to the final Course Rep Forum of the academic year. He explained that this Forum would focus on Technology Enhanced Learning. EM then introduced the Forum's panel.

2.	Update from VPE (EM)
	2.1 Student Choice Awards (SCAs) Students can nominate staff for the following Awards: • An Outstanding Lecturer • An Excellent Module • The Extra Mile Award for Support Staff (Non-Teaching) • The Sustainability Award • An Exceptional Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) • Excellence in Doctoral Supervision Award EM informed students that the nomination period closes on Friday 23rd March. He encouraged students to share the link with their cohort and to take part in the nomination process. 2.2 The Union Awards The Union Awards celebrate particularly dedicated and committed students, focusing on both individuals and groups from Societies, Volunteering and Academic Representation (Course Reps and Institute Reps). Under the Academic Representation category, there are Awards for "Course Rep of the Year" and "Institute Rep of the Year". Both staff and students can nominate students for these awards. EM explained that nominations are now open and students can submit their nominations via the following link: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/UnionAwards2018.

EM encouraged all Reps to share this information with staff and students and to get involved in the nomination process, nominating dedicated Course Reps and Institute Reps. Nominations must be submitted by Monday 9th April at 12pm.

2.3 National Student Survey (NSS) and Course Evaluation Survey (CES)
EM reminded Reps to complete the NSS and CES and to encourage other students to do the same. EM explained that student feedback helps the University to improve courses and the overall student experience.

2.4 Institute Rep Recruitment 18/19
EM explained that the SU would begin to advertise for Institute Rep positions soon on the SU website and social media. The SU will be interviewing and recruiting for all Institute Rep positions before the end of the academic year. Institute Reps receive a bursary and act as the essential link between Course Reps and senior staff members within their Institute.

2.5 Code of Practice
EM has been working on developing a new code of practice for the academic representation system and the Student Engagement and Representation Working Group have since viewed the first draft. EM will now send the consultation to a wider audience, asking for feedback, before the document is finalised and put into practice.

3.	**Technology in Worcester (ES)**
	ES introduced herself as a Team Leader in the Learning and Teaching Unit. She also introduced her colleague, NS, and explained that they will be noting down all feedback from students. 3.1 Technology Skills: Expectation and Development ES began by giving examples of the technology systems that the University already provides, such as SOLE, Blackboard (BB), and My Day. ES asked students the following questions. Students then discussed these questions in small groups for 10 minutes before feeding back: **What do you think the purpose of these systems are?** *(SOLE, BB, My Day)* • There is a consensus that students believe that the systems' larger role is to enhance the learning experience **What do you think the University expects of you in terms of technology skills before you start University?** • A student explained that, in his first year, there was an expectation that his cohort would know basic graphic design software and basic IT. He noted that the University's subscription to Lynda.com (a site that gives students video tutorials to aid their learning) helped his cohort to learn about different software and programmes. • A student explained that her cohort did not know about programmes that they would be using until they arrived at University in September. She also explained that there is an expectation to know basic skills such as email, Microsoft Office, Yammer etc. However, students

- without this knowledge are able to ask for help during Welcome Week.
- A student agreed that there is a baseline-knowledge expectation, especially with social media. For example, in first year, students are encouraged to join the cohort's Facebook group. However, some students did not have a Facebook account and so had to create one especially to join the group.
- A student brought the focus of the discussion onto mature students. There is a presumption that this demographic have prior experience using basic programmes and software. Students agreed that extra support should be given to all students who need it, including mature students.
- There was a suggestion that the University should offer refresher and practice workshops at the beginning of each year to remind students how to use programmes and software that are essential on their course.

How does the University help you to develop these skills?
- A student explained that her course offered an hour-long session every week called 'Study Skills'. These sessions focused on a variety of skills including BB, SOLE, report writing, referencing, etc. Lecturers did assume that students had an existing knowledge of Microsoft Office. However, the sessions were very open and they always made time for a general Q&A section at the end.
- Other students explained that they had sessions in first year to help develop skills e.g. online Library services. Since then, students have been told to visit firstpoint whenever they have any questions relating to skills-development or learning about IT/software. The students explained that IT naturally changes year on year and so they suggested that lectures held in the first week of every year should dedicate a small section of the hour-slot to go through topics such as BB or SOLE.
- A student explained that firstpoint staff were not aware of the software that her cohort were using and so the staff at firstpoint were not able to teach the students how to use the software properly. The Rep suggested that firstpoint staff should be kept updated with mandatory programmes and software on all courses so that, even if they cannot directly help them, they can point students to appropriate support staff or support networks.
- One Rep explained that his lecturer uploaded 5-minute video tutorials onto BB that explained how to use software and programmes. Students on his course found this very useful, especially in the assessment period.
- There was a consensus that students would benefit from mendeley workshops, as students find it difficult to use this program.

RR asked students if they found My Day useful and if they had any suggestions for improvement. Students replied that My Day is very useful and helps to keep them updated. Occasionally, the links do not work but students realise that the app is still under development.

3.2 Blackboard

ES explained that the Learning and Teaching Unit (LTU) are beginning to promote the use of course areas on BB. LTU make suggestions to staff about what works well on BB following student feedback. Therefore, student feedback influences BB's overall structure. ES asked students the following questions about BB. Students then discussed these questions in small groups for 10 minutes before feeding back:

What do you think about how your tutor makes use of BB?
- A student felt that tutors are inconsistent across the board. Some module lectures upload a lot of content whilst others do not use BB often.
- The same student noted examples of good practice on BB in one of their modules e.g. easy navigation, colour coordinating, hyperlinks, and tutorials.
- There was a consensus that BB should begin to practice uniformity to tackle inconsistency issues. For example, some lecturers communicate via BB whereas some lecturers communicate via Facebook; some lecturers structure folders in terms of Weeks whereas some lecturers structure folders in terms of content themes.
- Another student explained that her modules are consistent on BB and she finds this very useful.
- There is a consensus that uploading lecture slides before lectures onto BB is useful. However, the timing of sharing slides is inconsistent across courses. For example, some lecturers upload lecture slides a day before a lecture, some upload this half an hour before a lecture and some lecturers upload these two weeks after a lecture. ES explained that the guidelines currently state that resources are to be uploaded in a timely manner. This therefore leaves the precise times to the lecturer's discretion.

NS handed out a 'Student Blackboard Wish List' Leaflet, which was produced last year following a SAP Project. Student Top Tips included consistency, ease of use, navigation, announcements, contacts, relevance, FAQs, mobile friendly, course wide sites, and make it visual. **Are these items on this leaflet still relevant to students?**
- Students present agreed that these items are still relevant to students.

EM asked students for examples of good practice on BB. Suggestions included:
- Colour coordinating
- Implementing diagrams and images for visual learners
- Increasing the amount of primary folders to improve ease of navigation
- Organising folders into week 1, week 2, week 3, etc. Inside each folder, all content from individual weeks should be uploaded, including lecture slides, extra reading and any other resources used during the week
- Including an extra page on BB where Course Reps and their cohorts can communicate with each other. ES explained that she has discussed the possibility of adding Course Rep names and contact

details onto module homepages on BB with EM. LTU will update their 'blackboard suggestion page' with an advisory section on Course Reps to assist this.

3.3 Videos

ES explained the various ways the University could utilise videos to enhance the learning experience, such as virtual classrooms, lecture captures, video assessments, and flipped classrooms.

ES asked students the following questions about BB. Students then discussed these questions in small groups for 10 minutes before feeding back:

What do you consider to be the relative value of face-to-face learning and virtual learning (including recorded lectures)?
- Students agreed that videos around assessments or video tutorials would be helpful to add to BB pages.
- Students reasoned that if they are doing a video assignment, they should be taught exactly how to submit videos. There is currently a lack of acknowledgement or receipt with video submissions in comparison to course work submissions on Turnitin. ES made a note of this feedback and informed students that she would report to LTU.

Some lecturers record the taught part of their session and make it available before the lecture to allow active learning during sessions. How useful do you think this approach is/could be? Would you find having your lectures recorded useful?
- A student explained that if someone missed a lecture then it would be useful for them to be able to watch the lecture to catch up on what they missed. Having said this, the student noted that it would depend on the quality of the video. For example, if the recording is of a low quality and the lecturer remains stationary throughout, the lecture recording would be unstimulating and would prevent the student from watching the entire video.
- There were concerns around students taking advantage of lecture recordings. A recorded lecture might discourage attendance.
- A student explained that her course is very active and a lack of attendance affects other students in the group who are relying on numbers to do well on the course.

4.	**General Questions**
	One Course Rep explained that her cohort has been experiencing difficulty re-submitting essays on Turnitin. ES explained that students can only re-submit essays up to three times on Turnitin. When the student explained that she had difficulty during her first re-submission, ES suggested that, in the first instance, students should inform their tutors.
5.	**AOB**
	EM provided all students with two feedback cards. One card asked students for qualitative feedback about how they found the new forum structure, which now has more of a focus on group discussion.

	The other card was a 'Your Voice, Your Union' postcard and asked students four tick box questions about the Union's governance (for example, student council and submitting motions). Data collected will form part of the research into the Union's Governance Review.