

Course Rep Forum Notes: Retention and Recruitment

Tuesday 30 October 2018 (CC 004) 12:45-14:15

Attendance

Chair: Euan Morrison (EM, Vice President Education)

Panel: Ross Renton (RR, Pro Vice Chancellor), Will Bowen-Jones (WBJ, Head of Strategic Educational Projects), and Jane Britton (Director of Communications and Participation)

Also present: 52 Course Reps, Henry Lewis (HL, Graduate Ambassador) and Jodie Stilgoe (JS, Student Voice Assistant, minute-taker)

Minutes

1.	Introductions
	EM welcomed everyone to the first Course Rep Forum of the academic year. He explained that this Forum would focus on student retention and recruitment. EM then introduced the Forum's panel.
2.	Update from Vice President Education
	<p>Course Rep Forums are themed around specific topics or issues. The University has set three key priorities this year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention and Recruitment • Assessment and Feedback • Teaching Excellence <p>Each Course Rep Forum will be aligned with a key priority, the first being retention and recruitment. The Forum in December will focus on assessment and feedback, and the Forum in March will focus on teaching excellence. These forums enable Course Reps to have a real influence on University decision-making.</p>
3.	Update from Pro Vice Chancellor Students
	<p>Student feedback is paramount to changing and improving the student experience. The University experienced successes for the 2017-18 academic year, including Worcester being listed 18th in the UK for student experience.</p> <p>Feedback received from the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Course Experience Survey (CES) has facilitated the improvement of the student experience, for example, the following impacts resulted from student feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbishing City Campus to make it more student-friendly • Providing additional textbooks • Reducing lectures that take place between 20:15-21:15 by 40%
4.	Student Retention

Everything this University has achieved has been down to a collaboration between students and staff. WBJ noted that all University working groups he is a part of has student representation and therefore student voice.

Worcester aims to ensure that every student it recruits leaves with exactly what they set out to achieve at the start of their journey. The University aims to achieve this by offering all students an outstanding course experience, supported by a commitment to personalised learning.

Attendance

The University believes that regular attendance plays a key role in helping students realise their academic potential. Therefore, the University has implemented a Student Attendance Policy. (NB: An electronic version of the Student Attendance Policy was circulated with all Course Reps prior to the Forum). The purpose of this Policy is to provide a clear statement to students regarding the University's attendance expectations as well as ensuring that staff understand their responsibilities regarding monitoring student attendance and engagement. Different staff members will use different methods to monitor attendance.

It is the aim of the Policy to encourage a culture where students actively engage with lectures, seminars and independent learning.

The University has been researching the relationship between attendance and academic achievement and found that there is a positive correlation:

- Average grade for 75%+ attendance is B-
- Average grade for 51%-74% attendance is C-
- Average grade for <50% attendance is D-

Therefore, the data implies that students who regularly attend classes are more likely to achieve academic success than those who have poor attendance records.

This year, module leaders will record attendance using the "maintain registers" function on SOLE. For the first three weeks of semester 1, absent students would have received an 'absence email' from their module leader. In cases of continued absence and no communication from the student, that student would have received a further email from their Course Leader (and in extreme cases, the Head of School). If there is still no evidence of engagement, and the University receives no response or communication whatsoever, the student will be informed of the University's intention to withdraw them from the University.

Communication between staff and students is therefore crucial to the success of the Policy. If it is not possible for a student to attend their lectures, they are able to talk to the University to make them aware and so that the University can provide support and help if needed.

Reps were then presented with the following questions and were invited to discuss their thoughts on the Student Attendance Policy.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a) Do students feel the regular monitoring of attendance is encouraging more students to attend classes more regularly? b) In particular how effective were the absence letters in persuading students to attend more regularly, or to approach staff about problems which may be affecting their attendance? c) To what extent do students feel that monitoring attendance is a supportive measure? 2. Do students share the view that regular attendance has a positive effect on academic achievement? 3. What are the factors which make it more likely that students will attend classes regularly? 4. If students choose not to attend regularly what are the other ways they would engage with their studies? <p>After discussion, WBJ reminded Reps to raise these questions with their cohort and to feed answers back at their next Course Management Committee meeting.</p>
5.	Student Recruitment
	<p>Worcester's Communication department has an array of different responsibilities, including the University's website, UCAS Fairs, social media, recruitment, and open days. JB noted that Communications are interested in hearing student perspective on a range of matters such as why they chose to study at Worcester, how does the University describe itself (and whether this is an accurate portrayal), and through what means the students first found out about the University of Worcester.</p> <p>JB distributed clickers to students so that the room would receive instant feedback to the following questions asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where did you first hear about Worcester? UCAS Fairs/website or via a friend/family member were the two most popular answers 2. How many open days did you sign up for? The majority of students signed up to just 1 open day (with 0 being the second highest answer). Only very few students signed up to more than 1 open day 3. Did you attend all the open days you signed up for? 76% answered yes JB noted that this is an interesting statistic because Worcester finds that less than half the students who sign up to attend an open day actually do attend 4. Did you attend a Worcester University open day? 68% answered yes 5. What was most important to you on an open day? 54% answered that speaking to lecturers was the most important part of an open day. Other responses included seeing teaching facilities

and speaking to current students. Only 3% said that seeing Halls of residence was most important

6. We send out printed Open Day programmes – do you like that?

82% answered yes

7. Did you read emails about university open days?

45% answered yes, 42% answered that they read some of the emails received, and 13% answered no

8. Did you like receiving post pre-uni (e.g. newsletters/course handbooks/prospectus)

55% answered yes, 27% answered "sort of", and 18% answered no

9. Which do you spend most time on (social media)?

Facebook and Instagram were the two most popular answers

10. Do you know what career you want to go into?

64% answered yes. The remaining answers were either "not too sure" or that they did not know and they need more support and help around this

11. Would you recommend Worcester to another student?

92% answered yes

JB then invited students to ask her questions about recruitment and communication at Worcester:

How would you attract more Postgraduate students to the University?

The University is currently looking at how they can make the process easier for current graduates to progress into PG study at Worcester e.g. providing an Alumni discount, making the application process easier.

With PGCEs, the University has been working closely with the University of Coventry to recruit their graduates into PG study at Worcester because Coventry does not offer PGCEs.

A student noted that the PG application form was tricky to fill out for them, as they are an individual who is changing careers. For example, getting references is a difficult task when you are the most senior member of staff within an organisation. Other students agreed that the application form could be difficult for students who are changing careers and for mature students in general. JB will take this feedback back to the Communications team.

A student noted that their PGCE interviewers did not speak to their undergraduate lecturers prior to their interview. JB will take this feedback back to the Communications team.

JB explained what an unconditional offer is: a conditional offer means students will still need to meet the requirements (usually grades), and an unconditional offer means that the student has an automatic place. JB

	<p>asked students if receiving an unconditional offer would be reassuring for students. The majority of students answered that this would be reassuring.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Any other business</p>
	<p>EM noted that the Students' Union would be putting on additional Course Rep training sessions for those who were unable to attend the School-specific sessions in early October. Reps only need to attend one training session. He noted that these training sessions would be generic and non-school specific.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 November 09:15-10:30 TT006 • 16 November 13:15-14:30 BYG198 • 16 November 15:15-16:30 EEG169 • 21 November 14:15-15:30 BYG197 • 22 November 17:15-18:30 PN1014 <p>EM reminded Reps about the V-Record. Students who achieve a 50-hour award or higher will have it recorded on their degree transcript. He also reminded Reps to join the Course Rep Facebook Group (WSUCourseReps1819) so that they can keep updated with upcoming events.</p> <p>EM thanked the Panel and the Course Reps for attending and contributing to the first Course Rep Forum of the academic year. The meeting adjourned at 14:15.</p>