

**Student Council**

***18th February 2014***

**Report from Executive Committee**

**Purpose: To receive summary of the Executive Committee on first semester activity**

**Author: Executive Committee**

In previous meetings Council has received a mixture of written and verbal reports from the Executive Committee on their activity since the last meeting as well as highlighting some important issues or developments that may be important to Council. After the previous two meetings struggling, a new approach is being implemented to inspire debate, discussion and essentially hold officers to account for the work they are doing. With this meeting being the first official meeting of the second semester, Kynton Swingle, President, called for a written report from each member of the Executive highlighting their first semester activity. Below are the submitted reports from all members of the Executive Committee. I encourage all Councillors to read the reports and note any questions to bring to the meeting on any of our activity.

**Kynton Swingle, President**

I’m going to keep this relatively short and concise. The summer and semester one has been understandably busy, with the summer consisting of re-developing our communications pre-welcome week with new first year students, as well as being involved in the welcome week planning and organisation. The annual review of council was carried out, as well as recruiting new external trustees to fill the trustee board. Also the successful writing of the bid and initial development of Energize-Worcester was a major win for us. Becoming only one of only 25 Unions in the country to get funding for a two-year sustainability project that could not only put Worcester on the map, develop a project that could be rolled out nationally, improve the standard of properties for students and importantly save student money on their utility bills. I personally undertook 16 induction talks over welcome week. From the basic feedback sheet outside my office, I was able to approach the University on whole host of issues ranging from issues around childcare provision to improving the facilities of the University. A key part of my first semester consisted of the University’s Graduation week taking place in mid-November. During the week I attended the University Graduation meal where I mingled with the University’s elite, and afterwards moved onto town to celebrate with the recent graduates. I felt it was my duty to welcome back our new graduates and to celebrate their achievements on a good old-fashioned night out. From memory it was a good night out and a great time was had by all. I feel that this was integral to ensuring we are engaged with our student body once they move on from University. From taking a lead on developing our volunteering initiative and working on Green Impact, as well as completing our Strategic Plan, as I started this piece, it’s been a busy month. I have recently been working with the City Council to ensure the student voice is part of their budget consultation.

**Lee Collyer, Vice-President Student Experience**

**Induction & Freshers**

Delivered Induction talks to students across a range of course and attended all fresher’s week daytime and evening events at St johns and City Campus.

**Committee training**

Delivered re-structured committee training and all chairs (including new committees) have received memory sticks including all relevant info and documentation needed to run the their club/society

**Conferences and training**

Have attended various conferences and workshops including NUS Zone conference in Manchester, this brought about the idea for ‘SU on Tour’. Also Attended the ‘Student Mental Health: Where next?’ conference in London and the NUS’s ‘Out in Sport’ Workshop in London where I became one of the first Sabbatical officers in the country to be trained in how to deliver the NUS’s ‘guided visualisation of Homophobia’ and learnt about various issues that LGBT students face within a sporting environment at University.

**Sport England & Activity Survey**

Attended a BUCS and Sport England conference where Sport England announced a £15 million funding stream for Universities to provide new opportunities. Subsequently have begun work with the University to construct a bid to apply for a significant amount of money to develop new sporting opportunities at the University. The Student Activity survey created by myself and Hannah (Sports and Socs Co-ordinator) received around 450 responses and will form part of the bid.

**Sports Tour**

Organised the annual sports tour to Llorett De Mar which will take place in the 1st week of the Easter break. 90 students will be attending the Tour

**Societies Tour**

Organised the first ever group trip for societies which will be in Amsterdam and will take place in the 2nd week of the easter holiday. 46 Students will be attending the tour and have the opportunity to book on to activities such as a visit to the Anne Frank museum, Van Gogh museum, Heineken experience and Dam bar crawl.

**Disability Sport Day**

Worked with Glyn Harding in the Institute of Sport to organise a disability sport day where students, disabled or non-disabled, could come and have a go at a range of adapted sports including boccia, seated volleyball, wheelchair basketball, adapted rowing, table top games, blind football and power wheelchair football . The event was advertised nationally and students on the Disability sport module where invited to volunteer at the event as part of their 12 hour module placement. The event was due to take place on the 2nd feb but was postponed due to lack of sign ups, this is down to various reasons which we will take into consideration going forward.

**Varsity Planning**

Planning for the annual sporting event of the year event has been underway since late November. The series will take place from Sunday 30th March until Saturday 5th April.

**Colours Ball**

I have worked with the sports committee to arrange the venue for the colours ball which will take place at the Bank house hotel this year.

**Sport Development Board**

Myself, Hannah, and Paul along with two student reps who sit on the board have been working with the University to create a Strategy for sport over the next 5 years which incorporates both recreational, performance and disability sport. We have also worked Improve the sport scholarship system, which now exists in its own right. We have also worked with the University comms department to develop a much more accessible ‘sport @worcester’ page which will eventually have all information about studying and playing sport in one place.

**Mental Health**

As previously mentioned I attended the ‘Student Mental Health: Where next?’ conference in London and have since opened up more frequent dialogue with the University in order to collaborate better on events that take place throughout the year and to ensure that the University are looking into ways to improve the current mental health support we have.

**Samurai & Other Clothing**

The samurai deal took up a major amount of time earlier on in semester 1 and caused plenty of headaches but as we progress the University now has a more recognisable brand internally and externally. Despite plenty of teething issues and many headaches things are starting to improve, although we are still a long way from a perfect situation. It is important to note that over the last decade, branding of University sport has become more widespread and although there have been problems here; the cost of the kit is relatively cheap in comparison to many other institutions.

There is currently no recognised provision of clothing for societies and other institutes but this is currently being investigated by the SU commercial development manager.

**New Sports & Societies**

This year I have worked with students to form a number of new sports and societies taking the total number to almost 60. There were 43 in the summer of 2012. Notably, we are the first students’ union in the county to have an affiliated, student-led wheelchair specific sport club in the UK.

**Sports & Society Meetings**

Since the beginning of the semester, myself and Hannah have met with almost all of the existing sports and society to committees on 1-2-1 basis to discuss finances, membership, plans and events etc.

**Academic Societies**

Over the last couple of months I have started to look into the situation we have in terms of academic societies, or lack of them. I have researched the situation at Unions around the country of a similar size and have begun to look into how we can improve the picture here. I am presenting a paper to the LTSEC committee on the 12th Feb (ask if you would like to see this paper), to establish ways in which the SU and the University can support the creation and sustainability of Academic societies.

**Tom Clarke, Vice President Education**

**StARs**

Semester one has seen 486 StARs uploaded onto the SOLE system. However as has been established before we are very much reliant on the STAR Co-ordinators uploading the names of the STARs on the various courses, even now we are still waiting for some courses to do this.

Of these 131 overall attended the initial training put on by myself and a further 46 StARs attended the extra sessions put on by other members of University staff. Feedback for all sessions was positive, with the initial training sessions receiving an overall feedback grade of 33 out of 35.

At a University where the female to male ratio stands at 67%-33% in favour of women making sure each sex is equally represented is important. The StARs registered on SOLE at the current moment in time stands at 68% female and 32% male, clearly although not the same ratio as the University. However it is incredibly close.
 **StARs Forums**

There have been 2 StARs Forums to date and have focused on the themes of;

* Tuesday 5th November – *Induction, Start of Session, Freshers Week, Firstpoint, Peirson, the Hive and Facilities.* *(68 StARs in attendance)*
* Monday 9th December – *Worcester Weeks, Turnitin and Course Management Committees. (33 StARs in Attendance)*

**Level 6 StARs Forums**

StARs Forums have become a great way for students top feedback information to the University, however much of this feedback can be very broad. Working alongside the Head of Educational Development a much smaller forum of 3rd year students was set up to enable more detailed responses to be given in what students want from 4 key themes; The Module, The Course, The Institute and The University. The first of two of these forums took place 28th November 2013 and was attended by 10 students. The other part was due to take place 31th January 2014, however it had to be postponed due to a lack of availability of the students and is due to be rescheduled.

**The Module**

**A.** Identify up to 3 of the most important elements students want from a module

* Clear relationship between lecture programme and requirements of assessment.
* Provide regular opportunities for formative feedback throughout the module.
* Make full use of all timetabled lecture time and plan for active involvement of students in lectures and seminars.

**B. What could a module leader or module team do to provide an even better experience for students?**

* Provide the opportunity for weekly, informal drop-in sessions.

**The Course**

**A. Identify up to 3 of the most important elements students want from a Course**

* Clear and obvious signs of consistent approach of the course team, especially the interpretation of assessment criteria
* Clear evidence that the Course team have taken student experience into account at planning and preparation stage (e.g. work placements and scheduling of assessment
* Provision for students to develop employability skills and opportunities to develop possible career pathways

**B. What could a Course leader or Course team do to provide an even better experience for students?**

* Limit occasions when students are required to ‘share’ modules with other Courses.

Internal Student Survey

The University plans to launch its first ever ‘Internal Student Survey’. This is aimed at first and second years to fill in so that they can receive even more feedback on how they can improve the student experience at the University. However this has been met with some resistance with the main focus of this being on the apparent ‘over-surveying’ of students.

To combat this we have persuaded the University that for every Institute that gets a response rate of 65% they will receive £1000 to spend on their StARs system.

Printing Campaign

Many institutions across the country offer to all students a small sum of ‘free’ money on their student cards for the intended purpose of being used to print off their assignments and other work related material. This is obviously something that we would like to be able to offer to our students and a result the initial research is beginning to take place with the intention of a paper being written for ‘Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee’ (LTSEC).

**Wes Hudson, Representation Officer**

Since the start of the semester I have actively tried to engage students in participating and having a greater involvement with the Students Union. I have attempted to do this through a number of ways such as:

* Trying to get people to be involved with the various events and activities during this year’s Fresher’s Week.
* Encouraging people to take part in sports and societies.

NSS
January will see the launch of the National Students Survey (NSS), it allows students to have the opportunity to give their thoughts and opinions about their time at the university and their courses and institutions as well as improvements that could be made.
The feedback is used to compare yearly data which is available publicly to potential students their families about where they may want to study. The survey takes around 5 minutes and is a solid platform to make their voices heard.
As Representation Officer I aim to help to promote the NSS and to try to get as many students as possible to complete the survey. To do this I will aim to do a number of things:

* Create a presentation available to students outlining what the NSS is and why it’s important. Also show this presentation at the forthcoming star forum to educate them.
* Push the survey by using posters and leaflets.

Student Survey
As well as the NSS the University will be also be conducting their own survey helped by the star’s. If the return rate is 65% or higher, then the Stars will receive funding to renew the system.
To help this I will try to promote the survey further.

SU on Tour
I have recently been helping in the SU on tour scheme. With the help of the V-Team and other officers we are trying to get students opinions on the SU and what improvements they can make. The information will also be passed on to the new elected Executive Committee.

Having had this role since September I have felt there has been a great lack of jobs and issues to carry out as a representation officer. I have come to the conclusion that there isn’t a great need for the job, hence why the role will not be present in next year’s executive committee.

**Luke Hennessey, RAG Officer**

In the first week of September, I attended the National RaG conference at the university of Birmingham, where I attended various workshops and seminars based around improving RaG as a society within our University, and how I could improve as an officer. Whilst there, I took the chance to liaise with various charities and other RaG’s of all sizes. This gave me a better idea of how RaG should be ran, and gave me an insight as to how other Universities do things. Talking to representatives of various charities helped me mould my choices for the selection of our partner charities, and even though I had an idea of what types of charities I wanted to go for, I was astonished at the variety there was at the conference. Attending the conference was very helpful and I took a lot of ideas away from it that have helped me during my first semester in the role.

One of the main things we are running this year is a 3 week expedition to Peru, whereby we engage in a local community project in an underprivileged village for the first two weeks, then in our final week trek to the peak of Machu Picchu. This is through a company called challenges abroad in aid of the FutureSense foundation. This will be the focus of the majority of our fundraisers as there is a target we need to reach before we go, but we also have many fundraisers planned both inside and outside of University for our other three partner charities.

This takes us on to semester two, where most of our fundraisers will be taking place. Semester one has been about finding my feet in the role and organising everything, liaising with the charities and finding out what they want/expect from us as a University. As a whole, RaG has been very quiet publicly during the first semester but all the hard work has been done now and it’s time to start having some fun, so watch this space!

**Luciana Blaha, International Students Officer**

No report submitted

**Lisa Preece, Mature Students Officer**

No report submitted

**Zac Pritchard, Diversity Officer**

I stood to be Diversity Officer because I believe in an increase in liberation groups. This is why one of the first things I did was to ensure there was a representative for each of the liberation groups on council [BME, LGBT, Disabled and Women]. In doing this I could then ensure that these groups could feed me information for campaigns, as well as increasing diversity representation on council. However I feel a lot of work still needs doing to strengthen these groups. Nevertheless our Students Union has moved in the right direction, before I was Diversity Officer Liberation groups had not even had representation.

**Disabled**

I did a talk to disabled students before fresher’s week this talk was with the mental health nurse, student experience team and disability coordinators. This was the first of its kind students feedback suggested the SU talk was particularly useful. Questions was asked to the panel, some was related to Disability Student Allowance. It seemed that some people did not realise that they can be reassessed at any part of their course.

I kept in contact with the students I met at the “pre-fresher’s” talk some wanted to meet up to discuss concerns. I attended a fresher’s event for disabled students, I answered questions about how to get involved in the SU.

I had a student that came to me with concerns about dyslexia support. The student is on a year top up program but the University had not provided dyslexia support. This student tried to speak to disability services yet had no success, the level of work that has been submitted has been affected by this.

I had a meeting with the head of Disability and Dyslexia services, before attending this meeting I found out these delays had been wide spread. The student told friends to also get in contact with me and so we had a group session of students telling me how these delays had affected them. Students did not feel comfortable with coming to the meeting with me to address the concerns with Disability and Dyslexia services.

The meeting resulted in the University accepting there was delays and they could have done more. Also I could go back to the students to let them know that dyslexia support is now available. However there was evidence of poor communication from the University when addressing these concerns. I will be submitting this as an area to address and monitor in the Diversity and Equality committee. The Disability and Dyslexia service is happy to work with me on future students to ensure they do not have delays. Nevertheless the University feels it has learnt enough to ensure it will not happen again.

Plans for the future

I will campaign against a Government approach to assessing needs for disability benefits [ATOS]. This day of campaigning is on the 19th February therefore I will spend half the day against ATOS and then raising awareness about Mental Health.

I will also work with the SU to have a disability forum for support and a way of addressing issues.

**LGBT**

At the start of the year I met with a student that told me she had been attacked because she is Lesbian. I followed the SU’s advice to help and support this student. I will not go into any detail about this student on this report.

I held a vigil for students wanting to remember those that died of HIV on the 1st of December. This was unsuccessful therefore I did it at a different date and some students attended.

I did a stall in the SU raising awareness about HIV and the myths about HIV+ people.

I have ordered various material for the SU such as “signs of depression” this was from the students against depression website.

I have tried to support the LGBT society as an area has needed continual support. This society has folded a few times and yet is a good place for support, for some people.

I did a reading at a University Holocaust memorial service to remember those that still suffer torture because they are LGBT.

I organised a meeting on LGBT right titled now that we have same-sex marriage where now? The results were very specific to Worcester, out in a night club students have been called “fag”, “queer” and “bati” [probably more as well]. I therefore told our President that this is happening in Tramps, he told me that he is planning on raising this with them. If the bouncers know this is an issue then they might be able to stop the abuse. Also another issue was domestic abuse in LGBT relationships but a lack of confidence that the police will handle the case with respect. Therefore the Party I am associated with Labour, has organised a focus group by the police so that these issues can be addressed. This focus group can give ideas about what the police should do, this is open to anyone.

Plans for the future

Campaign against mental health cuts, LGBT students are more likely to use this service. Also follow up on issues addressed in the LGBT meeting about where should LGBT campaigning go now.

The NUS LGBT officer is coming to Worcester on the 28th to help us strengthen the SU’s links with LGBT students.

**Women**

I set up the Women network through Facebook, where the first councillor to represent women was elected. Since this councillor was elected I have ensured she takes the lead. I do not self-define as a woman and therefore should not state what campaigns should be.

However I am willing to support in any way I can issues women wish me to be a part of. There has been a women’s forum resulting in a need for raising awareness.

Plans for the future

I have been told that NUS Women’s officer will be coming to Worcester soon. When she comes we can hopefully involve more students.

**BME**

Again like the women’s group I do not self-define so I should not state what the campaigns should be. However there has been a BME meeting resulting in a campaign to get halal meat served as a choice. I addressed this lack of choice as an issue in July 2013 Diversity and Equality committee. Therefore this is why it is now going to a campaign with petitions [to start soon].

**Liberation intersection – campaigns that affect all groups.**

I have and am campaign against the privatisation of our student loans, and to make our terms and conditions more secure. Continue to try and bring about what my manifesto said, to have four liberation officer. I therefore feel we should still be looking at addressing this area of concern.