

Student Welfare Committee

Wednesday 17 October 2012

10.00am – 13.00

SALC 6

Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus.

Minutes

Present: Professor Denis Wright (Chairman), Mrs Margaret Cunningham, Dr Sharon Bolton, Mr David Allman, Dr Michael Emerson, Mr John Hughes, Mrs Mary Bown, Miss Sarah Parkes, Dr Simon Archer, Dr Vasa Curcin, Dr Sarah Freedman, Mr Gerry Greyling, Miss Rebecca Lane, Miss Kelly McKenzie

In attendance Mrs Sue Mannion, Professor Debra Humphris, Ms Lynda Chandler (Secretary).

Apologies: Mrs Leigh Turvey, Rev Andrew Willson, Mrs Joanne Harlow, Mr Charles Gallagher, Mr Brett Harmony, Dr Michael Jones, Dr Lynda White, Dr Mike Bluck, Professor Maggie Dallman, Mr Nigel Cooke.

Agenda Item

1. Apologies for absence

Ms Chandler (Secretary) read apologies from those listed.

2. Welcome new Pro-Rector (Education)

2.1. The Chairman welcomed Professor Debra Humphris, the new Pro-Rector (Education), who was attending the meeting to observe and meet the Committee members.

2.2. The Chairman introduced Ms Lynda Chandler as the new Committee secretary who is covering the post for the next 12 months.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting held on 18 June 2012.

4. Minute 5 (ii): Lee Abbey Agreement

4.1. The Chairman provided a brief update to the Committee. One of the four students provided with accommodation in two double rooms would not be taking up their place for 2012-13 due to resit issues. As the other places had been allocated to female students, the vacancy will also need to be filled by a female student.

4.2. The Chairman re-confirmed that selection of students is based on students in dire financial need already known to tutors and/or College services and is not by open invitation. For 2013-14 Abbey would be happy to adjust the gender ratio if the selection process is completed earlier.

5. Minute 5 (iii): Students not in attendance before re-sit exams – access to facilities

- 5.1. The Chairman clarified the difficulties being faced by students not being able to access College facilities whilst not in attendance. He also confirmed he had attended a meeting with Mr Nigel Wheatley and Mrs Lorna Richardson regarding producing a draft document to go out to all students in this position and on Interruption of Studies (IOS).
- 5.2. Dr Freedman asked if returning students could be encouraged to make a 20 minute appointment to discuss support as early as is possible as it takes time to set up accommodation information, etc. Dr Freedman also commented that written instructions were required to advise students on what to do and that resit students and students on interruption of studies needed different guidance. Mrs Cunningham and Dr Archer agreed that the requirements did differ. Dr Bolton offered to share guidance given to International students with Committee members.
- 5.3. It was commented that students on Interruption of Study (IOS) due to health reasons should be seen by the Health Centre. Professor Humphris agreed that communicating this advice was important. Dr Freedman stated that it was important that students were told to provide supporting evidence about who had been treating them whilst on IOS and requested that Senior Tutors provide a report that outlines the reason for the interruption. Students should be reminded to check their Tutor has supplied this.
- 5.4. Professor Humphris asked if there is a return to study policy in place and Dr Freedman confirmed there is.
- 5.5. Mr Allman asked if a list of students could be sent to the Health Centre and the Chairman confirmed that Registry is able to provide this information. The Chairman will discuss this, and the creation of two sets of concise guidance notes, with Mr Nigel Wheatley.

Action: DW, NW, SB

6. Minute 6: Greek Students and funding

- 6.1. Mr Greyling confirmed he had received copies of the reminder letters sent to students regarding fee payments. Miss McKenzie commented that Finance letters can be very harsh and students get contradicting information. It was agreed that the perception on a day-to-day basis appears to be focussed on debt collection irrespective of personal circumstances.
- 6.2. The Chairman asked Mr Greyling to liaise with him and the College Tutors to draft a protocol to help the Student Hub better identify referral services and provide suggestions of how letters from the Finance department could include more information relating to student welfare support services.

Action: GG

7. Minute 7: Student Experience Survey and Action Plan

- 7.1. Miss Lane confirmed the key points were discussed at QAAC the previous week. The proposal is to better utilise TV screens across campus and have a more tailored approach to different groups and to provide more access through web pages and more flexible opening times. "Mums and Dads" should get recognition of the role

they play and in future should receive dedicated training. The Graduate School and GSA are looking into how to provide better support for PG students at induction.

Action: Student Union to liaise with Graduate School and GSA

- 7.2. Mr Allman raised the issue of students not based at South Kensington (SK) accessing services without missing lectures. Mr Allman was asked to write a proposal about requirements for non SK students to send to the Chairman.

Action: DA

- 7.3. The Committee discussed the academic support roles available in the College and the Chairman confirmed that QAAC had reviewed all academic support roles earlier in the year.

8. Annual Reports

8.1. Student Enquiry and Accommodation Centre

- 8.1.1. Miss McKenzie provided a briefing on the changes relating to the Centre. An increase in student enquires was noted which Ms McKenzie confirmed was mainly due to a new, more accurate, enquiry recording service.
- 8.1.2. Miss McKenzie is currently reviewing the Hub on Tour for 2012 and the first event is at Silwood Park campus on 7 November. The Centre planned to introduce surgeries promoting the services of the Union, Student Financial Support and private accommodation options.
- 8.1.3. Mrs Mannion presented a summary on accommodation confirming there had been problems with the KX administrative system prior to invitations going out and as a result the application deadline was extended to the end of July.
- 8.1.3.1. A 13.3% decrease in applications was reported, with some halls having closed or changed to Postgraduate accommodation only.
- 8.1.3.2. Accommodation was not able to meet their first year occupancy target; this was mainly attributed to higher tuition fees, changes to immigration restrictions and 263 cancellations or rejections. As a result, 60 vacancies had been opened up to the wider student community.
- 8.1.3.3. Mr Greyling asked if any reasons were given for the cancellations and it was noted that students had commented on the distance and lack of transport from Paragon to South Kensington as a reason for rejection as well as more students opting to reside at home. In addition, Miss Lane confirmed the Union had been in contact with 360 students who were not in halls, mostly medical students, who generally stated money issues and travelling distance as the reason.
- 8.1.3.4. The Chairman mentioned that the suspension of several Masters courses had resulted in the decline in uptake of accommodation at Silwood Park campus.
- 8.1.4. Dr Curcin stated there had been problems over the summer with Wardens not receiving photos of students in residence. Mrs Mannion confirmed that

problems associated with an upgrade by ICT to the KX administrative system had been too close to the time of allocation and resulted in a delay in providing the Security office with the appropriate information. As a result, students under the age of 18 did not receive their student cards and some were consequently served alcohol at the College bar.

8.2. Wardens

- 8.2.1. Dr Curcin reported that he had found it difficult getting disabled access buttons installed at his Halls; Mrs Cunningham advised she could help with this following similar installation at other locations.
- 8.2.2. It was mentioned that there had been double the number of incidents with drunken medical students since the start of session – specifically with issues relating to the lack of appropriate controls over drunken students being served in Reynolds bar. ICSU and the Dean of Students had met with the Faculty of Medicine (FoM) Union whose events seemed to have been closely linked to these incidents. Dr Bolton commented that a FoM Union BBQ had coincided with the International Office welcome and that they had experienced similar disturbances. Dr Freedman recommended that a student wide campaign on alcohol awareness be considered.

Action: DW, RL

- 8.2.3. There had been a number of thefts in halls over the summer which had had a significant impact on morale of students. It was commented that international students continue to keep large amounts of cash in halls and Accommodation Services were actively looking into how best to address the situation.

8.3. English Language Support Programme

- 8.3.1. A brief update was given to support the annual report presented in March 2012. Mr Hughes advised that it was too early to know the impact the change in funding due to the new SPD structure will have.
- 8.3.2. The change in structure of the Pre-session course had been successful. Many students have had problems adjusting to the College environment due to the volume of lectures they face. Mr Hughes proposed setting up an introduction course in liaison with the International Office who could pre-publicise it at a sensible price. It was suggested that this would assist students with their transition to College environment. The Chairman confirmed that Master's students were the most vulnerable as was evident from the appeals received and that additional support that could help these students would be welcomed.
- 8.3.3. Mr Hughes confirmed this would be his last report for the Committee. Mr Hughes will remain in post until a new director is appointed. The recruitment process will resume in January 2013.
- 8.3.4. The Committee joined Professor Wright in offering their thanks to Mr Hughes for his services to the Committee and the Language Support Programme.

8.4. ICU Student Advisory Service

- 8.4.1. Mr Cooke sent his apologies. The committee briefly discussed the paper and it was agreed that year-on-year comparison statistics would be useful and should be included in future reports.

Action: NC

8.5. Health Centre

- 8.5.1. Dr Freedman advised that dates for exam stress workshops which are to be held at the Health Centre were available to book online. A copy of the flyer sent to students prior to the first workshops in November would be sent with these minutes.

- 8.5.2. Dr Bolton queried whether International students were required to show their passports to register with a GP. Dr Freedman would clarify this with the Health Centre reception and report back. It was mentioned that although anyone is entitled to emergency care, students could only register with a GP if they are in the country for more than six months. It was recommended that more emphasis should be placed on advising students to take out appropriate health insurance as well as advising students to bring their personal regular medication with them.

Action: SF

- 8.5.3. Dr Freedman confirmed the Life Coach Service will be funded by the NHS for this year and as such will be open to all registered patients, not just students. It was also confirmed that the Health Centre's counselling budget was to be cut from next year. Mr Allman, Dr Freedman and the Chairman agreed to meet to further discuss the implications and possible solutions.

Action: SF, DA & DW

- 8.5.4. Dr Freedman asked for all students to be told to annually update their personal details with the Health Centre. The Chairman agreed that a global email would be sent out.

Action: DW, LC

- 8.5.5. Dr Freedman commented that signage for the Watts Way Health Centre is incorrect and should read Dental and Health Centre. The Chairman offered to contact Nick Rolfe on her behalf.

Action: LC, DW

- 8.5.6. Dr Freedman confirmed that students at Charing Cross are not entitled to use the medical services at South Kensington (SK) as their contracts are with St Mary's and Brompton hospitals. Medics based at SK are entitled, with the exception of Graduate Entry and Postgraduate students. Students at Hammersmith miss out on access to specialist services because they do not want to miss lectures to travel to SK. It was noted that there is a funding issue for providing services away from SK. Mrs Cunningham enquired whether a partnership between the NHS and College could be explored.

- 8.5.7. Mr Allman asked whether the Imperial West proposal included dedicated space for counselling services. The chairman agreed to take this forward with senior management.

Action: DW

8.6. Student Counselling Service

- 8.6.1. Mr Allman advised there had been a 12% increase of attendance from the previous year with the highest categories continuing to be depression and mood change amongst an equal gender split. These figures are reflected nationally.
- 8.6.2. Two new posts joined the team but the service is still small compared to other comparable universities. A half a day service continues to be offered at Hammersmith but the facilities are not fit for purpose. Mr Allman asked if the Committee could make an appeal for space.
- 8.6.3. It was commented that students at Hammersmith feel disenfranchised. Mrs Bown suggested a shared facility two days a week between the Counselling and Disability Advisory Services may be possible. Mrs Bown and Mr Allman agreed to draw up a collective case.

Action: MB, DA

8.7. Student Financial Support

- 8.7.1. Mr Greyling summarised the College Hardship Spending Review (2009-2012) confirming that the income had declined by a third over the last three years, with no planned budget submission in the current Planning Round. The Chairman confirmed he would discuss this with Professor Humphris.

Action: DW

- 8.7.2. A general discussion about the various income streams into the CHF took place. Mrs Cunningham confirmed that UG students were no longer fined for ICT misdemeanours, instead having their access removed for two weeks which resulted in a further reduction in contribution to the CHF.
- 8.7.3. Mr Greyling advised funding for Dyslexia assessments (which had significantly increased in recent years) were currently paid from the CHF and consequently resulted in a large amount of funding being paid from a budget which is intended for hardship funding. Mr Greyling recommended that a new budget item specifically for Dyslexia assessments be put forward in the next Planning Round. The chairman agreed to raise this with Professor Humphris.

Action: DW

8.8. Disability Advisory Service

- 8.8.1. Mrs Bown advised that the figures show a continued increase in students declaring a disability. The Disability Services is struggling to keep up with demand despite increased staffing. The service is now based primarily on Level 5 of the Sherfield Building, in addition to retaining some space on Level 4.
- 8.8.2. The committee discussed the new Assistive Technology Suite on Level 5 Sherfield Building. It was agreed that Mrs Bown would liaise with Security and ICT to review the possibility to install a panic button and swipe card access to the room to facilitate longer opening hours.

Action: MB

8.8.3. Mrs Bown advised that the Departmental Disability Liaison Officers Network had been renamed to Departmental Disabilities Officers in academic departments and these posts served as named points of contact for students.

8.8.4. The new improved web pages are live and have received good unofficial feedback.

8.8.5. Feedback from Committee discussions relating to Disability Services

8.8.5.1. Management Board accepted a policy to allow students to record their lectures; although medical students needed to apply for a card for permission to record their lectures. It was mentioned that Senior Tutors are best placed to make first year students more aware of this requirement.

8.8.5.2. QAAC has endorsed the introduction of competence standards across College to ensure that students are clear on what 'competencies' are essential for each course.

8.8.5.3. QAAC recommended that students with special exam arrangements should be sat in a separate room. It was noted that for very large cohorts of students, who are already taking exams at multiple venues, this may not always be possible.

8.8.5.4. An accommodation questionnaire is to be available on the Accommodation website asking students if they are experiencing major problems relating to disability. It is hoped this will identify students with physical problems to facilitate improvements for next year as well as increase a positive awareness about disability.

8.9. Chaplaincy

8.9.1. Rev Willson sent his apologies. The Chairman outlined Chaplaincy staff changes.

8.10. International Office (IO)

8.10.1. Dr Bolton updated the committee on recent staff increases. The team recently worked on some Visa training with Registry staff

8.10.2. The IO continued to see a large number of visitors with over 6.5k visiting during 2011-12.

8.10.3. Dr Bolton was pleased to advise that the Marshall's scholarship is again available to students giving Imperial good profiling in the USA.

8.10.4. The Student Barometer Entry Wave Survey will be run this term, offering valuable recruitment incentive information to College and departments. The results will be available in January 2013.

8.10.5. The Rector's Ambassador Scheme provided volunteers to help the International Student Recruitment team with visits and the Wednesday campus tours. Through the scheme, Rector's Ambassadors can develop transferable skills with on-the-job training and optional workshops.

8.10.6. Mr Allman asked if any International students raised concern by what had happened at London Metropolitan. Dr Bolton confirmed that they had received some enquiries from Metropolitan students but not our own.

8.10.7. Mrs Bown asked if the IO run a Disability workshop for International students. Dr Bolton agreed to look into the possibility of allocating a ten minute session at the international student welcome briefing.

9. College Welcome Events

9.1. It was mentioned that "Moving In" day went well. The Chairman noted that he and Paul Noke had visited all 17 halls on the Saturday and that he had received good feedback from students and parents on the moving in process.

9.2. Dr Bolton commented that the timetable does not give international students long enough to settle in and get to know UK students. A recommendation for a larger integrated welcome week with workshops would be taken to the Management Board International Office Strategy Review.

9.3. Miss Lane discussed the Union putting on events before "Moving In" weekend as well as mixed student population events. The possibility of extending the welcome week to start earlier was discussed and the Chairman agreed to raise this issue with Professor Humphris.

Action: DW

10. AOB

10.1. Mr Gerry Greyling requested that Wardens notify Student Financial Support when they impose Halls fines. This is to ensure an auditable record of fine income is maintained centrally and in response to several FOI requests received relating to College fines. Notification emails containing the person details, CID, reason for the fine and the amount should be sent to Mrs Anjna Kaul in the Student Financial Support team in Registry at student.funding@imperial.ac.uk.

Action: VC

11. Date of next meeting

Date: Monday 18 February 2013
Time: 10:00-13:00
Room: SALC 6