

Student Welfare Committee

Wednesday 25 February 2013

14.00am – 17.00

SALC 5

Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus.

Minutes

Present: Professor Denis Wright (Chairman), Mr David Allman, Dr Simon Archer, Dr Mike Bluck, Dr Sharon Bolton, Mrs Mary Bown, Mr Nigel Cooke, Dr Vasa Curcin, Dr Michael Emerson, Mr Charles Gallagher, Mr Gerry Greyling, Mr Brett Harmony, Miss Rebecca Lane, Dr Lynda White, Rev Andrew Willson

In attendance Mrs Sue Mannion, Ms Lynda Chandler (Secretary)

Apologies: Dr Sarah Freedman, Professor Debra Humphris, Miss Kelly McKenzie, Miss Sarah Parkes, Mrs Leigh Turvey, Mr Andrew Keenan

Not in attendance: Professor Maggie Dallman, Dr Michael Jones

Agenda Item

1. Apologies for absence

Ms Chandler (Secretary) read apologies from those listed.

2. Welcome new members

2.1. The Chairman welcomed Mr Andrew Keenan, the new ICU Education and Welfare Manager, to the Committee.

2.2. The Chairman confirmed Mr Brett Harmony will be replacing Mr John Hughes as the Committee representative for the Early Language Support Programme.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting - Wednesday 10 October 2012

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting subject to the following amendments:

(i) Via her apologies, Dr Sarah Freedman requested that minute 8.5.3 should read that 'the Health Centre Counselling budget may be cut from next year'.

(ii) Dr Michael Emerson requested that minute 8.2.2 be changed so that the start of the first sentence now reads 'It was mentioned that there had been an increase in the number of incidents with drunken medical students since the start of session'.

4. Matters arising

(i) Minute 5iii: The Chairman confirmed that Registry can report Interruption of Study (IOS) students on specific grounds and that Tier 4 visa holders need to obtain a health assessment by the Health Centre. Dr Freedman would be asked to advise what would be a reasonable minimal time to assess students on their return. Departments are to make arrangements with Registry for necessary provision for

relevant students to obtain a guest card to access certain services. The Chairman advised that the access requirements for students not in attendance before exams and those on IOS were different and guidance will be added to student handbooks.

Action: DW/SF

- (ii) Minute 6: Mr Greyling confirmed he is liaising with Finance to add wording to their letters to students reminding them who to contact for financial support.
- (iii) Minute 7.1: Miss Lane confirmed the Union would be utilising the screens across campus.
- (iv) Minute 7.2: The Chairman has included an allowance in the planning round to trial a second evening session for next year. Counselling will be offering an extension of services next year. Mrs Bown confirmed that, subject to planning, they also propose to increase the Disability Advisory Service sessions. Mr Gallagher advised that the Student Hub were continuing to look at providing late opening but that it had not been utilised in previous years.
- (v) Minute 8.2.2: Miss Lane confirmed they were finding it difficult to get the message across to students on alcohol without being considered as patronising. The Medics Union had launched a “focus on” campaign with simple posters focussing on professionalism in medicine.

Mr Curcin advised the group that the Police Liaison Officer, Nigel Lawson, was keen to talk to students about “knowing their limits” regarding drinking, personal safety and getting home safely. Mr Curcin also advised that graphical posters to get the message across had previously been successful in halls. Miss Lane suggested an increased focus during peak “at risk” times, for example after exams, would be most beneficial. Miss Lane agreed to meet with the Wardens to discuss these proposals.

Action: RL/Wardens

- (vi) Minute 8.4: Mr Cooke advised that future reporting will include year-on-year comparisons and that The Advice Centre is looking at developing a casework system. He advised that the number of students seen were 522 students in 2010-11, 489 in 2011-12 and they are predicting an increase for 2012-13. Mr Cooke agreed to provide a breakdown of 2010 and 2011 data for the June meeting.

Action: NC

- (vii) Minute 8.5.2: Referring to the information provided by Dr Freedman, the Chairman confirmed he had spoken to Ms Mel Peter in Admissions and he has produced some draft wording to include on the Visiting Student Form for students visiting less than six months, to include URL links to the relevant NHS webpages. The information will be circulated to Department Administrators. The Committee discussed the feasibility of using the student card to identify these students. The group agreed further clarification was needed regarding the information provided by Dr Freedman and the eligibility of pre-degree students.

Action: SF

- (viii) Minute 8.5.4: The Chairman confirmed the email went out.
- (ix) Minute 8.5.5: The Chairman confirmed Estates had included this request in the next round of signage updates.

- (x) Minute 8.6.3: Mrs Bown confirmed that a room had been secured in the Commonwealth Building at Hammersmith which was currently being refurbished. They are planning to offer appointments on an as-and-when required basis with one day a week being offered from next year. Mrs Bown will meet with Mr Allman to discuss the possibility of sharing the space. All students should already have access to this building due to existing services within the building.

Action: MB/DA

- (xi) Minute 8.7.1: The Chairman confirmed he has raised this issue with Professor Humphris.
- (xii) Minute 8.7.3: The Chairman confirmed he has requested approximately £36k in the next planning round for the payment of Disability Assessments. It was mentioned that some other universities require their students to contribute to the cost of such assessments but that the availability of funds following the planning round would influence any future discussions around funding of these services. [Note: funding requested was approved]
- (xiii) Minute 8.8.2: Mrs Bown confirmed that security were not keen on students using this service after normal working hours at its current location, mainly from a security perspective. She also confirmed that she would still need to find the funds for swipe access to be installed if this was to become a permanent location for the service. The Chairman suggested that the service is moved to a space in the Library and agreed to look into the possibility. Miss Lane suggested students should be asked whether they would prefer to remain in Sheffield Building away from the view of other students. Mrs Bown was asked to survey the service users and report back to the June meeting.

Action: DW/MB

- (xiv) Minute 9.3: The Chairman confirmed that Professor Humphris was already looking at the welcome package and related issues. Several members of the group raised their concerns about extending the welcome week in relation to availability of halls, staffing and other resources. It was also felt that if the extension was only offered to certain groups of students it would cause more students to feel isolated.

Some members suggested that rather than extending the week it would be more beneficial to issue timetables earlier and provide a better balance between freedom and structure. Mrs Bown commented that due to frequent and late timetable changes students are not registering for the Disability Advisory Service. They are trying to be more flexible by offering drop-in sessions. The Committee agreed that more pressure should be put on Departments to stick to the timetable. Dr Bolton suggested that the pre-session orientation programme could be rolled out to non-international students.

- (xv) Minute 10 and agenda item 4: Halls Fines: Mr Greyling agreed to liaise with Wardens outside of the meeting.

5. Late sessions: Counselling, Disability Advisory Service, Health Centre

This point had already been covered in the action points above.

6. AOB:

- (i) The Chairman advised that as the Wardens Committee currently reports to the Accommodation Services Committee (ASC) but that the ASC does not formally report to anyone, it was recommended for the ASC to report to the SWC.
- (ii) Referring to Dr Freedman's request to flag up that the Health Centre will stop seeing Postgraduate students from 1 March, the Chairman advised that he had emailed the Wardens Committee with the number of students in their halls who had registered with the Health Centre. Student registrations have fallen and this has had an impact on NHS funding to the Health Centre, whilst non-registered students using the service has risen sharply. Dr Curcin commented that he had spent a lot of time and effort chasing students in an attempt to increase numbers. It was confirmed that the NHS registration numbers are refreshed every three months and that it would be good if there was an increase in registrations before the next refresh. Dr Curcin offered to meet with Dr Freedman to provide a better process for student registration with the Health Centre next year.

Action: VC/SF

- (iii) Point (ii) above progressed onto a discussion regarding the provision of services to students who will be residing at the new halls in North Acton. Miss Lane said the Union are not in support of the location, stating other staff had also raised concerns. Several Committee members commented that they have major concerns about the distance of the halls from the provision of College welfare services. Miss Lane anticipated a lack of engagement with clubs and societies as the high participation rates experienced have historically been due to South Kensington centric nature. It was commented that Warden representation on the planning committee of any new residences would be advisable as wardening provisions at North Acton would be critical. It was also commented that the seclusion of 700 undergraduate students would have a negative impact on student experience.

7. Date of next meeting

Date: Friday 21 June 2013
Time: 10:00-13:00
Room: SALC 6