

Student Support & Wellbeing Committee

Date: Tuesday 10 October 2017

Time: 14:00 – 16:00

Venue: Skempton Building, Room 601, South Kensington Campus

Present

Christian Adams (Secretary)
Hannah Bannister (Chair)
Mary Bown
Nicholas Burstow
Benita Cox
Lorraine Craig
Sarah Freedman
Anita Hall
Lizzie Huckle
Mark Kennedy
Mirko Kovac
Louise Menard
Paul Noke
Claire O'Brien
Fintan O'Connor
Mike Schacter (on behalf of Julia Hillier)
Rosie Summerhayes
Michael Swan (on behalf of Sue Mannion)
Angela Urasala

Minutes

- 1. Apologies for absence – David Ashton, Daniel Balint, Stamatia Giannarou (maternity leave), Julie King, Sue Mannion and Andrew Willson**
- 2. Minutes of the previous meeting - approved**
- 3. Matters Arising**
 - (i) Action tracker
Historical items that have now been completed have been removed from the Action Tracker.
 - (ii) Systems capabilities for students in Halls to select their own roommates – this system is in place, current uptake is very low, may need to look at promoting the availability. **Item completed.**
 - (iii) Interruption of Studies communications – due to other pressing issues no progress made over the summer. **Item ongoing.**

- (iv) e-Halls – this has not been shut down but has also not yet been pulled into ICT. **Item ongoing.**
- (v) Council tax for partners of sub-wardens – PN outlined the ‘journey so far’ with regard to Council Tax for Wardens, Asst. Wardens and Subwardens accommodation. All accommodation in College halls (except Warden and Asst. Wardens flats) currently attracts exemption under classification M of the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992, which describes a hall of residence as: “A dwelling...provided predominantly for the accommodation of students.” PN has been liaising with College’s legal, tax and property teams to establish why the Wardens and Asst. Wardens flats have been considered outside of the exemption and are therefore liable for Council Tax - and whether there are any grounds for arguing that the College should not be liable for the tax given the use of the word ‘predominantly’ in the Order. (This would save approx. £15-£20K per year.) The risk in doing so is that, if successful, this could lead to local authorities wishing to claw tax back in other ways (by reviewing the College’s summer activities, for example.) PN is also arguing that the same wording in the Order implies that the College should be able to allow non-student partners of Subwardens to reside in halls, provided the College can demonstrate that each hall is predominantly occupied by students. The risk in arguing this is that the VOA (Valuation Office Agency) could be invited to re-classify Subwardens accommodation in each hall in order that local authorities could then levy Council Tax for these dwellings, which could make the College liable for much more Council Tax (there are currently 45 Subwardens living in College owned halls, along with 14 Wardens and Asst. Wardens.) The general advice received so far has been to ‘tread carefully’ and, for the time-being, to abide by the rules already in place (i.e. that non-student partners of Subwardens should not be allowed to reside in halls.) **Item ongoing.**
- (vi) Catalyst Fund – in the run up to Welcome Week the ICU have trained 150 students as Active Bystanders, this includes Hall Seniors and bar staff. Potentially have a training model that can now be delivered to targeted groups to be trained as Active Bystanders. Plans to develop online training with HR to reach a larger number. 6 volunteers have been trained as Sexual Violence Liaisons. The Chair would like to acknowledge the good response from the call for volunteers.

4. Student Death Protocol

The Chair acknowledges that there is currently an omission in the Protocol in regards to Faculties. There needs to be further discussion about where Faculties sit in regard to the Protocol.

Feedback from the Committee:

- S 3.3.3 (a): is it appropriate to make an announcement in a lecture? Chair has confirmed that this can be managed. Each situation will be decided on a case-by-case basis and such an announcement would head-off any rumours or speculation on social media.
- S 3.3.7 (a): ICU have requested the Deputy President roles and contacts to be added to this section (Education, Welfare, Clubs & Societies and Finance & Services) as well as the Strategic Management Group (Head of Finance and Resources, Malcolm Martin: m.martin@imperial.ac.uk, Head

of Student Experience and Services, Paul Buckley:
p.buckley@imperial.ac.uk and Head of Student Voice and
Communications, Andrew Keenan: a.keenan@imperial.ac.uk)

- S 3.3.8: Request to add Occupational Health to list of departments to be informed of death announcement.

LM noted that SFS would need to be notified as well to ensure that no payment reminders are sent in the event of a death. The Chair agreed and has suggested that this should sit in a separate section noting SFS as a separate contact point but not under S 3.3.8.

Counselling requested to be added to this section so they are aware when all the relevant College contacts have been notified.

When do Faculty Senior tutors need to be notified? No conclusion reached.

ACTION: Faculty Senior Tutors to provide HB with suggestions on how they should be notified.

5. Wardens Update

Matters of interest to the Committee which were raised in the Residential Life Committee Meeting on Mon 9 October:

- (i) Identified a need to create a protocol to assist in determining when a student may not be suitable to live in Halls e.g. due to mental health, danger to self or others.
- (ii) Removal of the Residential Tribunal has created a difficulty in for wardens as where students are involved in serious cases they may have to act as a witness as well as the arbiter. Noted that in the student accommodation contracts signed by students the Residential Tribunal is still mentioned, need to ensure that this process is still available to those students. The Chair has noted that the Academic Registrar will decide if a matter is considered minor or major and major cases will be referred to the College disciplinary process / Student accommodation contracts will need to be updated to reflect the removal of the Residential Tribunal (contracts updated in Jan/Feb)

ACTION: PN to follow up on updating student accommodation contracts

- (iii) The number of Hall Seniors has been reduced by 30%, some roles advertised late. This has increased pressure on organising events in Halls and keeping an eye on students. Noted that there is a need for consistency and clear number of roles for Hall Seniors.
- (iv) The Residential Life Committee noted the loss of the College Tutors and the support role that they provided. The Chair acknowledges that there is a new system in place and new roles which will take time to embed. Need to identify where protocols are needed. HB meets regularly with the Faculty Senior Tutors and this is a work in progress. The Chair further acknowledges that there is a need for more funding for Counselling and the creation of a Student Advice Service that deal with more general queries. Discussion from the Committee identified that there is a need to determine what type of 24/7 service we provide for students, possibly an

out-of-hours helpline when urgent responses are required. One of the current difficulties is no cross College case-notes system so no baseline data available. Students need to have a clear understanding of what is not acceptable behaviour.

- (v) No clear procedure on how to message students about emergency situations in the vicinity of the College premises. There is no robust procedure in place for contacting students about emergency situations. This is an ongoing matter.

6. Update from Support Services

Disabilities

Induction events successfully introduced for students on the autistic spectrum, next year need ID cards issued earlier / welcome letter to new students this year included a recommendation to contact DAS early / plans to work with ISS to raise awareness amongst international students.

Occupational Health

Providing support to students where adjustments need to be made in settings such as labs. Need to provide support earlier so students ready in time for teaching / ergonomic sessions provided to students in the Computing Dept at student inductions / World Mental Health Day – no specific events however information provided to staff and students with relevant contacts.

International Student Support

Visa issuing problems over the summer due to the Home Office moving all their decision making to the UK, this has led to late arrivals and anxiety for students / 1500 students attended the Sunday Welcome / marketing the term-time trips programme to students / looking to the future should EU nationals require immigration permission post-Brexit this will increase the need to immigration advise and more staff would be required.

Student Financial Support

£ 71 000 (loans and granted) paid to students in 16/17 / Global Relief Fund has paid out £ 100 000 to 4 students and will help 3 of these students complete their studies / As part of the SGRF there is a small demand for the College to be able to take receipt of maintenance funds into its bank account to assist students from Nigeria and Bangladesh whose countries are imposing capital flight restrictions. A student wishing to take this up need to apply to the SGRF and any transfers will follow strict Anti- Money Laundering protocols before being disbursed to the student in the UK / Plan to carry out a Cost of Living survey in 2018 / Imperial bursary: £8 million paid out, students can choose how to receive their bursary e.g. MBBS students can choose to have this spread over 4 or 6 years / where there have been problems paying out the bursary it is better for students to contact SFS for an emergency loan rather than Dept's providing money which could be spent elsewhere / no update on funding for EU students post 2018.

Students Union Advice Centre

Sep/Oct very busy / dealing with accommodation queries, checking tenancy contracts, consumer rights issues and appeals / shared a stall with SFS at Welcome Week / introduced 6 cooking classes in Halls for new students

Student Hub

Student Hub refurbished over the summer / in Sep dealt with 4600 queries and 1700 emails / held Find-a-Flatmate event / check 150 tenancy contracts / introduced a Rent Guarantor Scheme for students, especially difficult for EU and international students to find accommodation without a rent guarantor.

Counselling

During the 2016-17 academic year there has been a 22.1% increase in the number of students registering for the service and 13.3% increase in the number of counselling sessions offered / mean average waiting times for initial meetings increased from last year from 10.2 to 12.6 working days / a number of Mental Health Awareness workshops took place over the past year engaging students in thinking about their own mental health and that of others / reduced the number of ongoing sessions offered consecutively to four following the initial meeting. Students are still able to have eight sessions in one academic year but their last three sessions might be used as monthly meetings or 'saved' to be used later in the academic year if clinically appropriate students are still able to receive all of their sessions consecutively / budget flat for current year, need for additional funding for the Counselling Service to meet the demand / for the first time honorary Counsellors to help out the service / the Chair acknowledged the hard work that the Counsellors do under difficult circumstances

ACTION: HB to explore funding options to expand service

Health Centre

2350 students have registered / late Thursday clinic sessions start soon / extra CBT sessions provided and 73 students attended over 3 sessions / Walk-in clinics now begin at 8:30 am – provide extra nursing time and triage / November 2016 successful seminar presented called 'Drugs – New Psychoactive Substances' run by Liam Watson – worthwhile to run a similar seminar on alcohol this year organised by the College

ACTION: HB to explore running seminar on alcohol

7. AOB

Interruption of studies and assessing students fit to return

- Need for clear and formal process for assessing students as fit to return. Currently there are mixed messages being sent to students with the result that students have the expectation that the Health Centre check is merely a formality. This does not allow for a proper assessment where it may be in the best interests of the student not to return. Not enough support provided to students to help them recover and prepare for a return to studies.
- Needs to be clear who makes the final decision and that the decision is a consensus among the interested College parties.

- Problems are magnified for international students, when placed on IOS their visa is cancelled and they return home. To return to the UK for a fit-to-return assessment the College issues a new CAS number as they need to obtain a new Tier 4 visa and this may give the wrong impression that they are fit to return to their studies.
- College Regulations need to be amended to allow changes to be made.
- The Chair has noted that guidance needs to be provided to NHS practitioners in the form of a pre-prepared statement to better understand life in Halls / will need to take account of PG students who are not in Halls.
- Acknowledged that this falls into a wider piece of work, as confirmed in the minutes of 6 June 2017, to develop a policy for a formal process to support students prior to, during and returning from an interruption. The Chair agreed this needs for be reviewed urgently and suggested smaller working groups to work towards drawing up a formal policy.
- Developing a process should be prioritised for this academic year.

ACTION: HB to pull into broader body of work on IOS and fitness-to-return

Annual Reports 2017 submitted:

- Paper D – Disabilities Advisory Service
- Paper E – International Student Support
- Paper F – Student Financial Support
- Paper G – Students Union Advice Centre
- Paper H – Student Hub
- Paper I - SCMHAS
- Paper J – Health Centre
- Paper K – Chaplaincy
- Paper L – Centre for Academic English