

**Open Meeting**

**7th November 2023**

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| **Meeting details** |
| **Meeting name** | **Open Meeting**  |
| **Date** | **Tuesday 7th November 2023** | **Time** | **18:00 – 19:00** |
| **Location** | The Little Room, Students’ Union, Plymouth Campus  |

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| **Minutes** |
| **1.** **Welcome** | Oli Horne – Director of Student Experience  |
| **2.** **Attendance / Apologies** | Sam Fortmann – School of Computing, Engineering and MathsAdam Holt – School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences 8 Students  |
| **3.** **Minutes of last meeting** | Inaugural meeting, no prior minutes for review. |
| **Representation**  | Presentation Overview of SU, student charter, voter figures for Sabbatical Officer elections Sam, why are School Reps not invited to UTLQC anymore? Isla following that up but University are changing their structures also. DVC Student Experience John Curnow looking at more student representation at university meetings. Adam, this speaks to a more faculty based Sabbatical Officer structure. Oli acknowledged that it does seem to suggest that and that it can historically been the case that some Sabbatical Officers get involved in services and entertainment which is covered by operational staff. Student – more information is needed about the welfare element for students such as accommodation. The university really needs to look at international students experience around accommodation.Oli responded that in his opinion, student welfare and wellbeing should be part of all roles and all have a responsibility to support students. The pressures on students are now massive and that support is needed. Isla added that welfare is part of each element, not a stand-alone topic and that it is just lower down in the rankings, that does not mean that it is less important. Isla noted that Sabbatical Officers have been speaking to the university registrar who is wanting to set up a task group around student accommodation and address that for international students also. Student acknowledged that things are changing and the university are trying but that the university really do need to address that. Oli noted that the landscape has changed in recent years and there are far fewer properties on the market, not only in plymouth but nationally. The university are working with the council on this but unfortunately it is not a quick fix and is very complex. There has been ongoing conversation for the past five years about this matter.Sam reported feeling like reps are caught in the middle. That it feels like there is a disconnect between faculty and the SU. What is UPSU doing to rebuild this relationship? Question – slide shows where students would focus representation. Regarding accommodation, currently on an apprenticeship but previously lived in students HMO and that licence was changed from student to professional let. Oli added there was demographic dip with fewer 18-year-old national so lots of agents/landlords were selling up at that time. Question – careers and employability key for international students. Oli agreed that accommodation and careers and employability are key services where international students would like representative focus.UPSU are no longer affiliated to NUS, students decided to disaffiliateComment - Uni not providing information to students about reps and then not providing course email lists and require that surveys are distributed by staff which is problematic if asking something controversial Student – feels like representation is almost gated, have a platform to share feedback so students more likely to engage. Isla responded that there is ongoing cultural behaviour within the institution that can hopefully be changed. The culture of holding information back and looking at transparency and consistencyIsla needed to leave but encouraged students to contact her if neededvpactivities@su.plymouth.ac.uk Proposal Faculty based Sabbatical Officers Sam – why flip upside down. Focus on greater student voice to shape academic structure. How would engagement be supported? By promoting the results of representative engagement and building the credibility and value of the rep system. Oli noted that the SU and university is also looking at a digital system to support the transparency of representation and support reps in collecting feedback – Unitu. Positive conversations with the university. Adam feels like the proposal covers all points. Sam, it feels like what School Reps have been working on for the past few months. Oli working on this for several months and this is a consultation period. Transparency and accountability also an issue that needs to be addressed. Oli explained that the university needs to get to a place where they are comfortable to open up and be transparent. Sam noted that the SU provides the tools and reps are caught in the middle, that it feels that there is no challenge to the university and that is not always transparent of what is happening. Oli understood that. Agree that the proposal was positive generally |
| **Cost of Living** | [Explanation of Community larder.](https://www.upsu.com/news/article/upsu/Cost-of-living-support-for-students-Community-Larder/)Period products available to collect freely from the Hive Student - Feel a lot that can be done to support students financially. Need to consider where the income comes from. If the SU has money they can support students. Oli explained that the SU gets a block grant from the university and then runs its own income streams such as bars, shops, entertainments, sports centre, advertising. Other ideas of how students could be supported. Student bank nationally where students can borrow money at a lower interest rate and pay it back when they can. Support from the Advice Centre putting students in contact with bursary and funding options  |
| **9. Any other business** | N/a  |
| **10. Dates for the diary** | Combined Sports and Societies Forum with DVC, John Curnow 9th November, 18:00  |
|  | **End of meeting** |

Academic Sub Committee Feedback

Assessment

* Not enough time between assessment deadlines, staff need to liase in order to make assignments more handelble for students - Creative Writing, Marketing, Law , Psychology Msc
* Lecturers have not made requirements/marking criteria accessible within a reasonable time period
* Feedback tutorials the day before dedlines is leaving students without enough time to make amendments- Architecture
* Feedback for 1st submission was not provided until after the 2nd submission date had past.- Msc Internationsal logistics and supply chain management

Content delivery

* Breaks between 2 hour lectures
* Breaks in lectures to discuss content
* Find ways to get more people involved in seminars – solutions maybe ask specific people rather than on a volunteering basis
* Library
* Library should either provide headsets or allow Bluetooth connection as not everyone has wired headphones anymore to use on library computers
* Library induction didn’t include info on how to take out laptops
* No information about the availability of coloured paper

SU

* Gym should be free
* Student representative meetings should be held in a more quiet place like RLB Hall
* Better venue for meetings like this for example a lecture theatre
* Free food in student meetings

Writing support

* Ongoing support for paper writing, not just in year one
* A number of students have expressed a lack of confidence in their academic writing capabilities. Whilst support like the writing café exists, it would be beneficial for an academic writing element in first year of course

IT and Learning Resources

* Shared school resources- eg film software/editing software is beneficial for everyone or green screen use for business school – Marketing
* Provide Headphones or allow Bluetooth device connection
* More accessible info on different resources and support
* Eco computers in library sometimes have reduced computing power or do not work
* The mics in lecture spaces not picking up the audio or making a static/echoing sound makes it difficult to hear the course content
* Maybe consider reading pens like city college for SEND benefit
* Optional training or re-cap on initial IT skilles
* Lecture audio/ video recording available to students
* Student support for new software in lectures
* Making software readily available to undergrads eg spss, thomson reuters
* Smarthub is glitch
* CAD lessons for architecture students, some people find it hard to learn software without guidance

University Cards

* Don’t always scan
* Don’t open doors for some rooms
* Solutions – making it clear on card design how to use It properly
* Be clear where students can access rooms/ buildings only by card

Module feedback

* Make module handbooks the same across a course so that it is easier to see gaps

Labs and practical sessions

* Smeaton building especially, Access hours – get locked out at 5pm is not enough time to do uni work after lectures are done
* Can only access software and hardware in labs so can't do coursework in the library it has to be in labs
* Lab machines not having access for students to work on
* Lack of technicians for IT help
* Software not up to date – Game development
* Davy building difficult to get into lab, door is blocked due to unauthorised access
* Lack of space for groups to use chart room –Navigation
* Prefer in class lab and practicals- EE Foundation
* Bigger space/separate groups into 3 or more- Physio stage 1
* Practical results update on DLE should follow what happened in the sessions
* ‘Take the helm’- the uni yacht used to be accessible to navigation students to go out on Wednesday afternoons with a uni provided skipper, this is now not available and many are disappointed as our course fees cover its costs

SOB&MS

* Difficult to do assessments/reports when data is only given 4 days before
* Face to face learning is preferable
* Many students had issues with having too little time to do the end of module assessments (only a week) as well as starting new modules
* Careers
* Careers sessions later in the year- too overwhelming at the beginning
* Would prefer smaller spread out sessions to one 2 hour block

PALS

* Would like PALS sessions where second and third year students help out first years

Student services

* Not supporting and signposting enough for international students with issues such as financial aid, information about foodbanks, or access to sanitation like washing machines while in the process of getting a bank account

Inclusivity

* Recordable / prevision of lectures
* Paremy has made us well aware though services
* Why aren’t we moving towards accessibility?
* Accessibility & wheelchair users have been made to feel a spectacle due to seating plans for them to be sat at the front of lecture halls
* Colour overlay systems not made accessible for dyslexic students
* Disabled / chronically ill students are placed in a position of unreasonable responsibility for their own advocacy.

Online Lectures

* Course reps miss representing their course
* IT issues
* Lack of space for groups to use chat room (new)
* Lectures and students preferred zoom setup over Panopto – easier to rewatch and record
* Virtual appearance (have a zoom meeting on and students who can turn up can ask the lecturer to attend it)
* Transcripts not matching the lectures
* Have online lectures at later times (5-6pm)
* Have email notifications in Plymouth’s app
* Exam content not being covered in lectures -> lack of communication between lectures when are went of ill long term

Recorded Materials

* Possibly have regular checklists that have clear outcomes
* No recorded lectures, ever & it would be helpful to have documents/presentations uploaded before the lecture start so we know what we are doing
* When there are presentations half the lecture topic is not in the presentation, you only hear it – this + recorded lectures = stubbed
* Bring back zoom for individuals w/ chronic illness + train strikes

Accommodation

* No non-recycling waste bins in Mary Newman Accommodation
* Everyday “lectures” not accepted
* Sports for postgraduate students
* Home at halls is not working effectively

Labs + Practical Sessions

* Practical results update on DLE should follow what we did in the practical sessions

Emdeck

* Half of course being expected to write our report as though we actually got to go which isn't helpful or fair
* Being turned down by lecturer for being slightly behind / struggling (CAT Emdeck)
* Financial help w it
* Sessions so confusing
* Some lecturers don’t upload Panopto videos
* Group work – could be good to choose a friend or 2 to go with
* They don’t record them because they say its interactive and they go around however to use excel and them failing through it is helpful they should still record
* More places for left-handed students! Agreed from marketing

Lectures:

* There appears to be a lack of engagement with certain lecturers due to a lack of directions when carrying out teaching
* Language barriers to some extent limit engagement
* Marketing

Seminars:

* Rushed
* Majority only last 1h30m/1h
* Not much assessment to ensure students are on track
* Tutors do not seem extreme well versed on their curriculum / content
* Based off feedback
* Marketing

Course Specifics

PHYSIO

* Bigger space / separate groups into 3 or more – PHYSIO. Stage 1

Navigation

* ‘Take the helm’ - the uni Yacht used to be accessable to Navigation students to go out on wednesday afternoons with a uni provided skipper, this is not not available and many are disapointed as our course fees cover its costs. - NAVIGATION
* Lack of space for groups to use chart room – NAVIGATION ALL STAGES

Game Development

* LACK of IT help in Smeaton – GAME DEVELOPMENT STAGE 4

EE Found.

* Prefer in class lab + practical – EE Foundation.

Robotics

* Access hours: cant access labs (specifically Smeaton 303) after 5pm. This is the only lab with all the software + hardware we need. Therefore cant do work after hours (9-5pm is also when we have lectures!) Used to be open until 10pm before covid. This gave much more flexibility for people who work / have class etc. Also student cards don’t always open the door during 9-5 anyway - ROBOTICS 4TH STAGE

Law

* My cohort are very argumentative, please send help! - Law
* No recorded materials, difficult for people who cannot make it such as ill or train strikes. Sometimes lectures move too quickly or a need to review a difficult topic is there. Powepoints are sometimes unclear. - LAW

CREATIVE WRITING

* Many members of the cohort have complained about attendance to lectures / seminars being mandatory – some students have to commute in which is often difficult for 9am starts – CREATIVE WRITING

ECONOMICS

* Recordings with tawer (projector thingy) sometimes do not appear on Panopto and sound quality is not always good. Also tutorials should be recorded. Writings on the smart board sometimes don’t show