

**EDUCATION COUNCIL**

09 May 2018 // MINUTES

Time: 18:30

Venue: SU Main Hall

* **Welcome and introductions**
  1. *VP Ed welcomed attendees to the council and explained its role within the SU democratic structures.*
* **Officers report**
  1. *VP Ed explained that the implementation of the Academic Representation Review is ongoing, with the Partnership Agreement and new Terms of Reference for Staff-Student Committees going to Academic Board in a couple of weeks.*
  2. *VP Ed also explained that, as part of this, elections of the course and department reps will be elected online via the SU voting function, as already happens for Student Group elections. A question was raised with regards to department rep elections: if you lose a department rep election, would you automatically be elected as a course rep? After double checking with the Deputy Returning Officer, it has been confirmed that if you wish to be a course rep, should you not be elected as a department rep, you will have to stand for both positions. In light of being elected in both, you will automatically be given the higher role.*
  3. *VP Ed also raised the work undertaken with College in the aftermath of the UCU Industrial Action in March. This resulted in the creation of a hardship fund, which will reimburse students who have incurred costs in getting to campus, only to have their classes cancelled (such as commuting students or student parents). There was a question about what will happen to the leftover money if it is not claimed, where it was confirmed that the decision has yet to be taken and any action will be dependent on the amount left unclaimed.*
* **Items for discussions**
  1. *Attendees were asked to provide feedback on the experiences of their cohorts for the following questions related to the strike action:*
* *How did students feel during the strike action?*

*Key theme throughout comments is confused. Some students felt like they didn’t have someone to turn to during the action, and that the difference in levels of support/communications made it difficult. There was a comment that international students felt anxious as they did not know whether the attendance (or lack of, in this case) would affect their visa status/lead to deportation. There was one department who appears to have excelled in communication, with lecturers informing students the night before if the class was cancelled, so people didn’t travel unnecessarily. There was also one comment that there was some anger that other universities have given financial compensation but RHUL are not.*

* *Have your exams been affected? If so, how?*

*Roughly half of the comments were regarding changes to exams to compensate for missed material, such as a shortened exam or content removed. There are a couple of comments from modules ran in Term 2 only where the exams have not been adjusted, though for multiple reasons, including the strike action, about half of the teaching did not go ahead.*

* *Were your contact hours affected? If so, how?*

*There was varied impact here. Some only lost two lectures worth of content, where others lost up to 80%. Some had classes rescheduled (although the rescheduled classes then clashed with extra-curricular activities) where others did not. Some lecturers combined topics to ensure they were covered, and another department made sure the lecture/seminar went ahead, even if not with the intended lecturer. There was greater concern about the lack of consistency with office hours/supervisor meetings, meaning that questions about assessments/dissertation discussions were not able to be had.*

* *Were your assessments/feedback delayed? If so, how?*

*The loss of office hours was a prevalent concern here, too. There was one instance where a dissertation research project did not receive any feedback until the last minute, whereas others were able to access a tutor regularly due to them not being on strike. Again, the picture was varied across departments. Some made feedback available on request, most were delayed (some with little to no communication). One was only made available when students had emailed asking about an impending exam on the same topic.*

* 1. *VP Ed presented the new versions of the course, department and faculty rep role descriptions for comments from the attendees. There were questions about the operational aspects of the new roles (such as who coordinates the various meetings) but no questions about the content. These were happily adopted to be taken forward to the next academic year.*
* **Elections**

1. *George White was elected as the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty Representative.*
2. *Kate Roberts was elected as the Science Faculty Representative.*
3. *All other positions were not elected and will be taken forward to the 2018/19 Autumn Term Council.*

* **Any other business**
  1. *N/A*