

HUU Academic Council - Minutes

Meeting: Academic Council

Date and Time: Monday 15th November at 17:15 ending 19:15

Venue: Hull University Scarborough Campus, Quad 3



Part A: Unreserved Business

Part A :

Name	Membership Category	1/11/2010
Matthew Barrow	VP Education, HUU Chair	✓
Lee Fallin	ERC, HUU Secretary	✓
Matthew Brown	VP Scarborough,	✓
Course Representatives		15 in attendance, contact committee secretary for full details.

1 Apologies for absence

Action

Apologies were made by 6 members, please contact committee secretary for details.

2 Welcome

The Committee welcomed all Course Representatives to their first meeting. Chair, Secretary, VP Scarborough and Course Reps introduced themselves.

3 Standing Orders governing Academic Council

Chair reviewed the Standing Orders governing Academic Council and went through the Terms of Reference for members.

4 **Declarations**

(a) Reserved Business

No reserved items

(b) Members' Interests

Members were invited to declare if they had any personal or pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in any item on the agenda under Standing Orders. No declarations were made.

5 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the last Scarborough Academic Council were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting of the Academic Council.

7 **Chair's Report – VP Education**

The Chair delivered a report to Academic Council

“Scary Times for Students”

This year has been a groundbreaking start for the Education Zone. It is seemingly the first time that a strong and active representative structure is in place. The first time that HUU is leading worthwhile and powerful campaigns, and is also the first time HUU has worked collaboratively and constructively with the University.

Lee and I have been non-stop busy and it just shows the scope that the Union has to make important and progressive changes that can improve the student experience for our members and our institution as a whole.

If we compare to last year's achievements, we have improved no end. In terms of the representative system, so far across campus we

have 415 Course Reps, compared to last year's end of year total of 401. We have trained 174 Course Reps trained so far compared to last year's total of 175 with lots more training in the pipelines. 97% of reps responding agree or strongly agree in satisfaction rates for training compared to 90% last year and also this year we will actually have Faculty Reps as well as Senate Reps, compared to nothing in place at all last year.

However, I feel it important not to dwell too long on these statistics, but to look forward and make the most of what we have achieved so far. As course reps, you are the basis of everything the Education Zone can achieve this year. It is so important for you to speak up and make those tiny but ever so important changes, I, like the University, value your ideas and thoughts unequivocally.

By the end of this meeting, we will more or less have a full system in place. A system that can be capable of so much. A strong and active representative structure should be central to the University's decision making process and in troubling times ahead is more important than ever.

I have worked really hard this year at getting Course Reps on the map, the final step of this is to launch our final publicity campaign. We will be providing you with the opportunity to buy Course Rep hoodies to promote yourselves, we will be putting posters around campus soon encouraging students to speak to their Course Reps and also we will be putting your contact details on our website and also our Union notice boards.

I have been working very hard on a number of projects which I will be speaking through in a few moments. I have put them on the agenda, as I feel it's important that a wide range of views are consulted on these projects and that each of you, as representatives have your say. Don't be shy, we're not here to judge or say no to your ideas, Lee will be taking minutes and I will do my very best to follow up on any action points and communicate those back.

Before we move on to Chair's Actions, I think it's important to run through a couple of other things I have been up to and give you all opportunity to ask questions.

Firstly, I was asked at the start of the year to help the University with their QAA Collaborative Provision Audit. This involved visiting local HE partner colleges and conducting focus groups with their students

to find out what issues they were facing and whether the academic provision they receive is meeting their expectations. This will feed in to the SWS that we are obliged to write and is due to be submitted next week. If anyone wishes to read it, it will be on our website.

I am also currently sitting on a University working group which will be writing a new code of practice on representation, as well as completely re-writing the Education Zone standing orders. Both are very outdated and not particularly fit for purpose. This has been put on the back burner until Christmas, and will hopefully involve wide spread student consultation.

I have also been organising various events for Mature and Part-Time students. In welcome week we ran a Cheese and Wine party. 80 students from the previously hard to reach groups showed up and is something I'm hoping to work with my Zone on throughout the year.

This completes my report but firstly I would just like to say a huge thanks to Lee Fallin who has been fantastic in sharing my passion to work hard and make the Education Zone so successful this year. He has been helpful in every way imaginable and we're lucky to have him.

8 Chair's Unreserved Business

(a) Assessment and Feedback.

MB introduced the upcoming working group which will consider a new University wide policy on assessment and feedback. Course Representatives offered the following contributions:

English students noted that they receive feedback in a meeting, which while non-compulsory, is very useful. They are also provided with written comments. Further meetings available on request. It was noted that they were provided with no exam feedback, and the general comments made were not useful as exams are too long ago and stressful to remember.

Business students commented that there was great inconsistency between feedback procedures, varying from individual meetings to general feedback lectures. Business students wanted more consistent practise.

Digital media students noted they were offered meetings much like English students, as well as mock exams. Their lecturers also operated open-door policies. Business students had concerns over being given past-papers, model answers and mock exams as their lecturers ran very similar exams year-on-year.

In general, students commented that they were mostly given written feedback on assignments, but the quality was dependant on the lecturers and as it was hand-written it is not always legible. When questioning if feedback should be typed, it was highlighted that some lecturers were not very computer savvy, and that they may find it difficult to type. Some students also had concerns that typed feedback may be impersonal, and may encourage lecturers to use generic paragraphs with "copy and paste" feedback.

Some business students highlighted the useful practise of getting marking criteria with every assignment, highlighting where they were at.

While variable, in general, all students received assignment feedback in 2-4 weeks. They believed this should be standard practise.

Centralised submission

Students felt they were not fully explained the new system well enough. They were not told or informed about the new procedure, nor the submission times in sufficient detail. Many students felt communication was almost entirely by word of mouth.

There was serious comment about the signature box on the submission forms not being totally anonymous as they signature was pressured through. Even so, students were not convinced about the level of anonymity offered on assignments, but liked the illusion of it.

The fact that departments have different submission rules, but submission was central was found confusing.

d) Library

On the whole, students liked the new library but would like it to be 24h, especially when they have multiple assignments due. While the general feel was that the library is better, students have several issues to raise

- The self-service machines are broken
- They felt there was a general lack of resources and books
- Students were often unable to find books. This is because there is no shelf labelling and it is hard to know which rows books are on
- The general consensus is that it feels like there are less computers, even though there are assurances this is not the case. Nevertheless, there is student demand for more computers.
- Students noted that a computer suite had been moved out of the library, and was now not as assessable. There was criticism of the new mac suite, as the majority of students do not know how to use them.
- While more laptop space has been provided, not everyone wants to bring them in. It hasn't worked.
- Some students felt the new library was "too open plan" and that the quiet area was too close to the noisy central area. There was strong criticism over the room size as the big room acoustics does not help.
- Many students felt let-down by the spaces upstairs. They are generally quieter, but provide no work-spaces or computer terminals. As there is a lack of workspace upstairs, students take books downstairs and leave them – they are often not

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- reshelved. Either this or students are forced to take their books home as it is quieter. It defeats the point of a library.
- There are many broken wall/desk power sockets, so even students going to the effort of bringing in laptops are unable to use them
 - There are no signs to label the library service desk, IT support and the admin desk. They're all in the same place and students often queue at the wrong end.
 - Student welcomed the online inter-site transfer request.

++AOB

MB² VP Scarborough introduced the issues surrounding the Study Skills Service and Dyslexia Support due to their de-centralised locations. MB² suggested a solution is to move them into the library.

Students offered the following comments:

- There is nowhere to put these services in the library. The only place is the meeting rooms which are needed. Even then, the rooms are not sound proofed and privacy is needed.
- Some students argued they are fine where they are, but need better signposting.
- There was concern over their location and accessibility for disabled students.

MB² asked Course Reps to go back to the student body and consult them further on this.

d) +

MB outlined the Hull library campaign so that Scarborough Academic Council was aware of the plans. MB highlighted the need for more discussion on the issues with the new Scarborough library as the situation in Scarborough was very different. Further discussion:

- There is a real perception that students do not have enough resources. Given a need, they can study in any environment, but they need the resources in it to study. While the new library looks good, money would have been better spent on books and IT.
- Not only are there not enough books, many of them are very outdated.
- A lot of libraries are 24h.
- Electronic resources are only good to a point. They limit study to staring at a screen for hours. If electronic resources are to be expanded – printing must be cheaper. There is still a

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- general preference for printed books.
 - There was some discussion on the licences, and the availability to print digital resources and digitise paper resources. MB² suggested using screen clipping software to circumvent licences that do not allow printing. The legality of this was questioned.
 - Some students highlighted the need for more ejournals and less books.

(b) Academic Framework

MB introduced the new Academic Framework the University is considering introducing, describing it as mixing the credit values of modules beyond the current long thin and short fat modules the University runs and potentially offering more flexibility. Students offered the following comments:

- There was concern over module length. Smaller credit modules may be shorter, and if this is the case is there enough time to learn the topic?
- Will smaller topics be too general? Will students have enough time to learn indepth?
- Students liked the current offer of both long and short term study with long-thin and short-fat modules.
- There was concern over assessment method and split for smaller credit modules.
- There was concern over time-table clashes as even in the current system, many free-electives clash with main teaching. Some students commented that they were not allowed to take a free elective, even though their main course left them with three free days.

+ Free electives

- If free electives in Hull are to be offered in Scarborough, transport must be offered
- Travel time is an issue, as are timetable clashes.
- Students wondered if staff could come to Scarborough to do free electives rather than moving a whole class to Hull.
- Students wanted to get their core-timetable in good time so they could choose free electives that fit into their core timetable.
- MB introduced the campaign to move all free electives to a Wednesday morning to avoid clashes.

Please contact committee secretary for full details of election

Open Forum / AOB

- Committees should be integrated and should help each other
- More free elective offers in Scarborough
- Scarborough students feel they missed out a lot in freshers week, making them feel isolated from the main campus.
- There was discussion on buses to the main campus for entertainments, but the cost and issue of students being sick weighed against favour of this.
- MB² noted that Scarborough entertainments lost money, and needed more support to continue running
- There was some discussion on the possibility of purchasing a bus inter-campus activities, entertainment and library use. A daily bus with a small charge? Or just when there are events.
- Business students noted that while international business is offered they are extremely limited in languages they can take.
- Some students highlighted that it had to be accepted they chose Scarborough campus, and if they want Hull services they should have gone to Hull.
- Students felt all courses should be on a single campus to avoid confusion when applying and to avoid split module options.
- Some discussion was opened on Scarborough as the innovative, experimental campus. Students did not want to be the guinea-pigs, but like the idea of trying out new things as long as too many things were not tried. They did not want their campus weakening, and thought it would be demotivating to staff. Student consultation is needed on all experiments.
- Students liked the idea of Scarborough being a specialised campus.

8 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was not set

Signature of Chair _____

Date of signature _____

These minutes are available in alternative formats on request from the Education Hub.

UNAPPROVED