

HUMANITIES FACULTY COMMITTEE

Thursday 11 April 2024

- Present:** Fiona Devine (Chair), Emma Rose (Secretary), Nichola Ellis, Martin Evans, Claire Goulsbra, Katie Jackson, Ken McPhail, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Mario Pezzino (for Claire Alexander), Thomas Schmidt, Constance Smith, Fiona Smyth, Roz Webster, Umit Kemal Yildiz
- Apologies:** Claire Alexander, Maggie Gale, Charles Insley, Patricia Perlman-Dee, Mabel Sanchez-Barrioluengo, Jon Shute, Rachel Walton, Richard Whalley
- In attendance:** Gemma Keaveney (note-taker), Victoria Roberts (Business Support Manager), Vicky Skinner (Head of Faculty Finance), Fiona Keenan (Head of Faculty P&OD)

1 Welcome, introductions and apologies

Professor Fiona Devine welcomed the group to the meeting.

2 Minutes and actions of previous meeting

Confirmed that actions from the previous meeting had been completed or were in process. The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024 were approved.

To note on action HFC070224-03-01 that a number of questions had been submitted to further inform content of webpage relating to teaching sustainability and Emma Rose will take this forward.

3 Teaching Sustainability update

An update on progress was provided by Fiona Devine with a reminder of the key project drivers. A slide deck is available, and this will be included with the minutes of the meeting.

The Dean confirmed that it is important to remember what this project is NOT about i.e. it is not driven by finances or by timetabling although both elements are to be considered within the scope of the project.

Work to date has involved general housekeeping and working through data and this will continue for some time through normal quality assurance processes and reporting to Senate.

As colleagues will be aware, this project started within Humanities and has now become a University-wide priority with Fiona Devine as project sponsor. The Task Force now includes members from FSE, FBMH and Central DSE who are tasked with developing this work further.

There is much work around issues relating to curriculum design principles and the long term development of a portfolio management system which need to be considered holistically as a University rather than at Faculty level.

To date, the work we are doing is different to other Faculties as they do not have the same proliferation of pathways and programmes, however they may well have a similarly large number of course units.

The Chair noted that this type of work is ongoing outside of our institution with some more brutal cost and value elements attached in some universities.

This piece of work will take further time to develop and produce robust policies and procedures and to embed itself in our continuous improvement practices.

The Committee were asked to feed back any questions or views about the principles to be applied to our portfolio to ensure sustainability, reflect staff interests, and progress an excellent student experience.

A question was raised about how students are included in this process and the Chair confirmed that Katie Jackson, student representative, sits on the Task Force and is able to feed into the process.

In terms of future students, the Vice-Dean for TLSE confirmed that surveys are regularly conducted with those who decline places at UoM to understand why they do not take up offers. Students tell us they want choices but then do not take up the extent of options in place when they get here.

HFC110424-03-01: Data supporting this issue to be brought to the Teaching Sustainability Task Force.

Confirmed that programme directors discuss rationalising option choices when working on new programmes however further thought and discussion is required for current programmes. There is a way to deliver structured choices however this requires more strategic and sophisticated thinking.

The Committee and the Task Force welcome opportunities to get the views of our students and the Chair confirms that she and Emma Rose would be happy to discuss further with School student representatives.

Another query raised was how flexible, hybrid, blended learning fit in to this project? Confirmed by the Vice-Dean TLSE that when building programmes, there is nothing to dictate whether the programme should be face-to-face, online, etc. but definitions may need to change in line with external requirements and regulations. We should seek to review these requirements to enable a full and flexible curriculum.

4 SEP Evaluation

Emma Rose presented the SEP Evaluation slides as members of the evaluation project were unable to attend the meeting. A copy of the slides is included with these minutes.

Members were encouraged to respond to the survey to enable a fuller picture of the impact of the SEP People & Structures outcomes on staff. Colleagues may also contact the Evaluation team directly and get involved in focus groups as appropriate. The SEP Evaluation survey can be found at: <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/news/display/?id=31184>

Head of School for SEED confirmed that a huge amount of feedback had already been given through a variety of channels and asked to what extent this feedback is being incorporated into the evaluation.

HFC110424-04-01: Emma Rose to discuss this with SEP Evaluation team and report back to this group.

UPDATE: Complete and response sent to Head of School for SEED

5 SEED School Board motion – SEP

It was reported that staff had raised concerns about the project including the amount spent which was estimated to be c. £50m. Other issues raised related to how PS staff are being supported throughout the changes, plus the short and longer term effect on colleagues impacted by SEP, how this information is captured and how it is being acted on. Some uncertainty remains around the lessons learned, the impact on staff and whether UoM management will listen to the experiences of colleagues who have been involved or impacted by SEP.

It is confirmed that wellbeing is a priority and additional resources and staff support have been put in place to address some of the issues. We should acknowledge that there is a wide range of stakeholders involved in this process and there is a requirement to ensure everything is balanced in terms of approach.

Although unable to prejudge the outcome of the evaluation, we can and will look at whether preparation for the changes had been adequate. Academic staff engagement, although extensive, may not have been quite in depth enough to meet the need and that communications with this group could have been better. For the most part of the process, the change programme – directed at students, has proved popular and bringing services into hubs has been viewed as a successful enterprise.

It is noted that although exit interviews have been conducted with those who left the University during the SEP period, it is difficult to extract any useful information from these interviews. That said, the University is due to launch a new employee lifecycle project which will provide more meaningful data on reasons for staff leaving. This project will be in three stages and will offer an opportunity to share information on their experience in starting at the University and after six months in post.

A wellbeing survey is also scheduled for launch week commencing 15 April and P&OD colleagues hope to home in on SEP impacted teams and offer appropriate support.

6 On campus assessment

The process for approving on-campus exams is light touch. The Faculty need to collate information about all the on-campus exams to ensure that the University can plan for the exam periods. For example, ensuring that we have access to additional buildings/spaces (e.g. Sugden Centre if required). We are near our capacity for delivering on-campus exams already. A proposal is currently under discussion to extend our semester 1 exam period to increase capacity for next academic year.

The main process for mitigating the risk of cheating in exams is to adapt assessment methods and assessment tasks. Whilst we recognise the concern with open-book/take home exams, this risk is no greater than the risk we have with coursework which is part of our assessment practices in most programmes.

7 Palestine

There is an official channel to [report and support](#) and colleagues and students are encouraged to use this process for reporting issues relating to any kind of discrimination so that issues may be addressed. There is a category within the report and support system for religion as well as other protected characteristics.

Confirmed that there are competing views on what is happening globally, and we need to respect the differing views of oppression or otherwise. It is not the place of colleagues in this meeting to address the issues around the Ukraine. Nalin Thakkar will discuss this further at the April Senate meeting.

For any colleagues who are trapped or in need of assistance in other countries during hostilities, they should contact CARA who will then liaise with the University directly.

Responses to specific issues raised can be found at the end of this document.

Any Other Business

The Chair reported that Nichola Ellis had acquired a new role outside the University and thanked her for almost three years' service on the Committee.

Action Log

Item reference	Action	Lead	Context	Update
HFC110424-03-01	Data supporting this issue to be brought to the Teaching Sustainability Task Force.	Emma Rose	In terms of future students, the Vice-Dean for TLSE confirmed that surveys are regularly conducted with those who decline places at UoM to understand why they do not take up offers. Students tell us they want choices but then do not take up the offers in place.	Data to be shared at the next Teaching Sustainability Taskforce Group meeting.
HFC110424-04-01	Emma Rose to discuss this with SEP Evaluation team and report back to this group	Emma Rose	Head of School for SEED confirmed that a huge amount of feedback had already been given through a variety of channels and asked to what extent this feedback is being incorporated into the evaluation.	COMPLETE It was confirmed with Allan Pacey (lead for the evaluation project) that it is best to assume that any previous feedback will not be considered in this review. None of the committee have been involved in SEP or any of the previous reviews and so might not be aware of what has previously happened. In addition, whilst the questions are quite open ended, they are specific to the “People and Structures” elements of SEP.

Item 7 – Palestine

1. The issue of the silence and fear on campus for staff and students in organising events and raising awareness about the horrific genocide in Palestine.

	Question/ statement requiring a response	Response
1	Where are our support mechanisms for students in relation to the events in Palestine?	<p>We understand that our University community continues to be deeply concerned about the ongoing violence, loss of life and the dreadful situation in Israel and Palestine.</p> <p>The University and Students’ Union continue to stand together, committed to assuring good community relations at this difficult time as detailed in the University and Students’ Union joint statement on standing together against hate which has been published on StaffNet.</p> <p>Nancy and other members of the Senior Leadership team have spoken of the small, but nonetheless unacceptable number of reports of racial hatred, harassment and fear. We were reminded that any support for organisations that are proscribed by the UK government as a terrorist organisation, including Hamas, are likely to face serious consequences because it is in breach of UK anti-terrorist laws.</p> <p>We continue to work with our Students’ Union and relevant student societies, our Muslim and Jewish Chaplaincies and, where appropriate, with Greater Manchester Police. We also continue to remind our staff and students of the range of support options available to them, and we provide tailored support from specialist colleagues where reports of hatred, harassment or fear are received.</p>
2	What support is the Faculty going to put in place for funding Palestinian students to come to our University?	<p>CARA (Council for At-Risk Academics) has advised us that currently it is not possible for academics to leave Gaza and will advise us when this is possible. The university will try to facilitate hosting of academics who meet the relevant criteria.</p> <p>In addition, as you will be aware we have established a number of fully funded scholarships for undergraduate, postgraduate taught students and postgraduate researchers affected directly by major conflicts and disasters. The Humanitarian Scholarships were created in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine but are open to any international applicant who has been displaced because of armed conflict or is at serious risk of persecution or violence due to race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.</p> <p>There are ten undergraduate and ten postgraduate-taught places on offer in the first year and successful applicants will have their fees, living expenses and visas covered.</p>
3	What support is the Faculty going to put in place for staff and students keen to organise events and invite internal and	In the current conflict in the Middle East, as you are no doubt aware, there have been various position statements published by staff and student members on the matter, journal letters published by our staff, and protest marches by both students and staff on campus.

<p>external speakers to discuss Palestine; and support for staff and students who are openly critical on social media about the oppressions and crimes committed by the state of Israel.</p>	<p>Our campus has also hosted numerous events at which internal and external speakers have discussed and debated the current conflict and associated issues.</p> <p>We recognise and support peaceful and respectful protest and the right to free speech within the law and we are working tirelessly to ensure that our community remains a safe and welcoming place for all.</p> <p>We have frequently stated that all forms of racism, antisemitism, islamophobia, discrimination, and abuse have no place in our community.</p>
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2. The ongoing conflict in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

	Question/ statement requiring a response	Response
4	<p>UoM should sever institutional ties with Tel Aviv University/BAE Systems in order to remain true to its principles of social responsibility.</p>	<p>We apply any internationally/nationally agreed ethics frameworks to our research. Currently, this would include research involving human subjects and animals. Beyond this, we follow principle of academic freedom within the law and prevailing regulations.</p> <p>Assessing issues through a ‘moral’ lens, beyond the internationally or nationally agreed frameworks and standards set by law, risks violating academic freedom of colleagues. There were several actions we could take as individuals. Everyone has a right to take personal actions such as boycott of products and services, take part in protest, voice our opinion in other ways. We also each have a right to not work in areas we feel conflict with our own values. We can engage in debate with colleagues about these issues to persuade them not to work in the same areas. Finally, we can campaign for change in the law or regulation, or even challenge the government (as many eminent lawyers did recently to withhold sale of arms to Israel). But we do not have the right to impose our values on colleagues undertaking legitimate, legally permissible activity.</p>
5	<p>Establish a partnership with Palestinian institutions of higher-education whose scholars and students are at risk.</p>	<p>When the region is safe, how the University may contribute to the rebuilding of HE institutions will be considered in the same way we may explore support for colleagues and institutions in the Ukraine and other war torn areas such as Yemen.</p>
6	<p>Memorialize Dr. Wiesam Essa. For example, establishing a scholarship in his name for students from Gaza or the West Bank, and/ or, inviting at-risk Palestinian scholars to Manchester.</p>	<p>We were of course deeply saddened to hear of the death of Dr Wiesam Essa and shared a tribute with The Guardian on 25th January. Discussions are taking place in Geography about how best to honour Wiesam’s memory.</p> <p>It is for SEED to consider whether it will fund a scholarship in the name of your colleague. The matter should be taken up with the Head of School. The decision would need to be made collectively and would require agreement on how the</p>

scholarship may be funded. Where colleagues are working with Palestinian scholars, they can always invite them to Manchester for visits etc and find ways of funding them.

3 Islamophobia

	Question/ statement requiring a response	Response
7	<p>What is the FoH and UoM's response to the rising Islamophobic and racist tropes that have been on the rise since October 2023?</p>	<p>The UoM/FoH has issued statements making very clear that we abhor all forms of Islamophobia and, indeed, antisemitism on campus and do not tolerate it from either staff or students.</p> <p>The joint statement from our University and our Students' Union, reaffirming our zero tolerance to racial hatred and discrimination, 'Standing together against hate' has been issued, which has been followed up by a joint message from our Jewish and Muslim Chaplains. These messages have also been repeated in our University-wide student newsletters and our staff news channels and we continue to remind people of their responsibilities and urge support for tolerance.</p> <p>Reported incidents of Islamophobia are small although they have increased. Reported incidents of antisemitism have also grown (and at a greater rate). Clearly, the increased number of reports is of concern and we continue to work with our Students' Union and relevant student societies, our Muslim and Jewish Chaplaincies and, where appropriate, with Greater Manchester Police. We also continue to actively promote the reporting and support options available to members of our community.</p>
8	<p>What is the FoH and UoM's response to the accusation that Islamophobia and how it affects UoM students and staff is not dealt with adequately and the lack of provision and policy to make Muslim students and staff feel safe?</p>	<p>There is no evidence that Islamophobia has not been adequately dealt with or that there is a lack of provision and policy to make Muslim students and staff feel safe. If there are specific examples of where students or staff have felt unsafe, these should be brought to our attention immediately so that we may look into them and take steps to ensure those affected feel safe and are supported.</p>
9	<p>When will the university take a stance on ceasefire in Gaza and make a statement in relation to the ongoing genocide inflicted against Palestinians? And if not, then why not?</p>	<p>As a publicly-funded University, our core mission is discovery and improvement of knowledge through research and innovation, and dissemination of knowledge through teaching and learning, and, to operate sustainably in relation to our own functions.</p> <p>Essential to our core mission and enshrined in our core values and also within the law and UCU charter, is the principle of academic freedom. We provide a home and act as a sponsor of a diversity of views, and indeed, we embrace and encourage this as it is essential to intellectual inquiry and in furtherance of our core mission.</p>

We accept that these views may be diametrically opposed to each other, may be even offensive or unpalatable to some and may be only shared by a minority. However, as long as they don't crossover into illegality or are disrespectful of others, we protect the right for those views to be expressed. As soon as a university steps away from this neutral stance it ceases to be a neutral home for the different views and marginalises a section of its community.

We have an obligation under our public sector duty to foster good relationships within our community of students and staff. Marginalising any group of students or staff by the organisation formally adopting a position on a matter outside our core functions that they do not agree with, is not in keeping with essence of these obligations.

10 Are there scholarships available for Palestinian scholars and prospective UG/PGT/PGR students? If not, why not?

Please refer to Q2 above.

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