SEED Student Voice Committee (SVC) - Postgraduate

Date: Wednesday 19th November 2025

Time: 13:00-14:30pm

Location: Ellen Wilkinson C3.19/3.20 / Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Attendees: Kathryn Telling (KT) (Chair; Associate Director of Student Support & Wellbeing), Bo Murphy (BM) (Co-Chair SEED School Representative), Rory Stanton (RS) (Director of Student Support & Wellbeing) Maria Baltazar Viegas (MBV) (Student Communications Coordinator), Rachel Challinor (RC) (Student Support and Development Manager), Amy Matthews (AM) (Secretary; IAG TLS Administrator).

34 Reps in attendance:

In Person Attendees

Lin Zhong – MA International Education

Yuwei Yan – MA International Education (TESOL)

Huimin Yang – MA DTCE

Molly Andrews – MSc Green infrastructure

Natalie Jones – MSc EIAM

Ramesh Maileshwar – MSc Development Economics & Policy

Jasmayne Saunders – MSc International Development: Public Policy and Management

Medhawi Rajgaria – MSc Development Economics & Policy

Xiaoqian Cao – MA TESOL

Ruiling Lu – MEd Psychology of Education

Zuoru Chen – MEd Psychology of Education

Tong Xu – MA International Education (TESOL)

Changjing Sun – MA International Education

Xiaomei Shi – MA International Education (TESOL)

Sanjukta Menon – MSc Human Resource Development (International Development)

Muhammad Wahyudi – MSc Human Resource Development (International Development)

Ziheng Deng - MA Education for a Sustainable Environment

Grace-Ann Ababio – MA Education for a Sustainable Environment

Naiyer Tabraiz – MA Educational Leadership

Olivia Bedford – MSc Urban Regeneration & Development (URD)

Anna Mawdsley – MSc Environmental Governance

His-ju Chuang – MEd Psychology of Education

Online Attendees

Mia Taylor - MA Educational Leadership

Zeynep Baydar - MSc Global Development

Maelys Ramounet – MSc MIDP

Rachel Higton - MEd in Psychology of Education

Siobhan Ernest Shay – MEd in Psychology of Education

Vanessa Oparaugo – MSc Geographical Information Science (GIS)

Tanya Lewis – MA Education for a Sustainable Environment

Rafael Camperchioli Arguello - MA Digital Technologies, Communication and Education (DTCE)

Yiqi Yang - MSc OCD

Songwei Li - MSc GIS

Ruirui Dai - MA Educational Leadership

Makena Odongo – MSc Developmental Finance

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

   KT opened the meeting and introduced themselves as the Associate Director for Student Support & Wellbeing. KT explained that the purpose of the School-level meeting is to provide oversight of issues that extend beyond individual programmes, focusing on the overall student experience, identifying positive developments, and exploring areas for improvement.

   BM introduced themselves as the SEED representative. RS introduced themselves as the Director of Student Support & Wellbeing, and AM as the meeting secretary. KT confirmed that minutes, including actions, will be

circulated to students following the meeting. RC noted that they are the SSD Manager, and MBV introduced themselves as the communications Coordinator.

KT welcomed all attendees, both in person and online. They reiterated that while programme-specific concerns are normally addressed at programme-level meetings, this School-level meeting aims to facilitate broader discussion across all programmes. KT noted that the committee would review all comments submitted via Padlet and apologised for any delays or issues related to previous communications

2. Minutes/Actions of the last meeting

Not reported.

3. Rep Consultation

<u>Reps Recruitment and Training</u>

- BM reported that feedback submitted via Padlet was positive and well received.
- Students noted that it was "really nice to see" the information provided about the rep role and felt they received sufficient guidance on what being a rep involves.
- KT added that, overall, feedback from reps regarding recruitment and training had been positive.
- One representative shared that they appreciated the online training, highlighting its flexibility and accessibility.

Action 1: BM to provide feedback to the Students' Union regarding the positive reception of the rep training.

Rep Visibility

- KT invited comments on rep visibility and how this was working in practice.
- Students shared approaches they had used to improve visibility and were asked to provide tips for others.
- BM asked whether Programme Directors (PDs) had been helpful in publicising reps to staff. One rep noted that their PD supported them by creating a slide to introduce their name and role.
- KT asked reps to share any challenges they had encountered:
- One rep reported low engagement in their feedback process, with only about 4% of the cohort participating.
- Another rep explained that they and their fellow reps coordinated through WhatsApp to prompt responses, which led to higher engagement.
- KT acknowledged that apps and messaging platforms can be effective, noting that students may feel overwhelmed by email communication.
- A rep shared that emails can be ineffective because students feel overloaded by the volume of messages.
- Another rep observed that in-person feedback has been more successful, explaining that speaking directly with peers encouraged more engagement, alongside using short surveys
- KT asked if there were further comments from attendees:
- RS read a comment submitted by RCA online, who praised their Programme Directors, noting: *"Great programme directors! Two meetings, two surveys, and a lot of great ideas already!"*
- KT acknowledged this positive feedback and passed over thanks.
- RS then shared feedback from VO – a rep online, who reported challenges with low responsiveness. She noted that reps were selected and introduced relatively late in the term, and that many students were reluctant to engage or raise questions.
- It was also noted that for shorter, one-year programmes, this issue can be an additional challenge.

<u>Welcome Week</u>

- BM summarised the feedback received via Padlet, noting that international students in particular experienced difficulties with getting set up and arriving on time for Welcome Week activities.
- BM invited further comments from representatives.

<u>Event Availability and Scheduling</u>

- A rep reported that programme-specific events for Master's students filled up very quickly, with many sessions—such as SU events and the Master's Networking Session—becoming unavailable. The SEED Networking session that afternoon had also not provided enough spaces, leading to ongoing access issues. BAM confirmed they could raise this with the Careers Service to explore expanding capacity in future.
- An EG representative commented that while a formal welcome took place, there were limited opportunities for more informal social interaction within the course. They suggested that more structured social events would be helpful.
- Several reps expressed that Welcome Week was overwhelming due to the large number of events offered, which some students found confusing and not always welcoming. BAM noted this concern had also been raised in the Undergraduate SVC, and discussions were underway about whether events could be spread into the weeks following Welcome Week.

Promotion and Communication

- Mia Taylor (online) noted that the Safe Zone app was never promoted during Welcome Week, despite being a valuable safety resource for students. She felt many important items were missed and that information did not reach students effectively.

Rep Visibility and Pathways

- An online rep (VO) reiterated earlier concerns about low responsiveness among students, explaining that reps were introduced relatively late and many students were hesitant to speak up.
- Another online Rep (ZM) asked whether student reps were responsible for collecting feedback for their entire MSc Global Development programme or only their individual pathways.
- RS clarified that the MSc Global Development typically has multiple pathway reps. For the purposes of this meeting reps could share any feedback they had, and the team would help clarify roles moving forward.
- Zeynep noted confusion over who should collect which feedback, explaining that visibility strategies would differ depending on whether reps covered the full programme or only their pathway.
- RS advised that reps could speak with SEED Hub colleagues in the HBS building, who have expertise in communications and student engagement.

Pre-Arrival and Induction Support

- A rep from Developmental and Economic Policy noted that although there were many induction activities, the volume made the week overwhelming. They suggested spreading out events and providing pre-arrival workshops.
- This rep also suggested an online workshop delivered before arrival in the UK to help students prepare during the summer—covering topics such as organisation, travel, and key processes—so that students do not feel "dropped in" without preparation.
- KT agreed that this is a particular challenge for Master's programmes due to their short duration.
- RC explained that for the current academic year, communication began early: personal email addresses were used, and communication campaigns started in March. A month-long communications schedule ran from early September to early October.
- RC added that informal socials are offered to Programme Directors to help bring cohorts together, and that communications approaches had been updated this year.
- An online offer-holder event had been delivered in August as a pre-arrival session, though more work was needed to raise awareness of such opportunities.
- A rep praised the newsletters, noting that students "love them."
- They also highlighted that programme-specific details—such as part-time timetables—would be appreciated.
- RC thanked the rep and noted this feedback.

Technical Issues and Registration

- BM shared online feedback from Rep – MR who noted low attendance at course events (e.g., only 5 out of 50 attendees), and shared her own difficulties registering and selecting modules, which resulted in being enrolled on the correct courses only two months late.
- KT sought clarification on technical barriers, such as issues receiving emails or accessing timetables.

- A rep said the emails had been helpful overall. RC noted that the pre-arrival communications team sends emails prior to arrival, and that Hub information had been incorporated this year into monthly communications.
- A rep noted that many students struggled with Step 10 of the registration process and did not understand how it worked. They felt unprepared.
- RC asked whether including financial information would help; the rep confirmed it would, adding that offer-holders would benefit from clearer guidance at the pre-arrival stage.
- Reps suggested webinars to cover practical setup tasks such as opening a bank account, setting up IT, and creating a university email account. RC confirmed that some of this information could be provided.

Action 2: RC to feedback these suggestions to the Communications Team.

Course Unit Selection and Timetables

- A rep noted they received staff reminders to select course units but could not view all available units, which made planning difficult. They suggested more flexibility, including access to full timetables.
- RC explained that students' timetables are generated based on their programme structure, which is why they cannot access all options.
- Another rep noted receiving timetable information from the Hub e.g. an email was sent to them with this information. RC noted this was not the correct practice.
- Reps noted that may students found it stressful being told to enrol on Semester 2 units early. There was a suggestion that Academic Advisers could support with this process.
- RS clarified that students have two weeks to audit classes at the start of term and should be able to access all schedules for those two weeks.
- RS also reported on rep comments received online:
    - Students had not received information about an October deadline for choosing Semester 2 electives and only learned of it when chased after the deadline had passed.
    - MIDP students received emails indicating incorrect credit balances despite being correct.
    - Information on optional modules was difficult to find online.
    - Some students believed they had to complete all registration steps before selecting courses, causing confusion and stress; clearer guidance was needed.
- RS noted that these issues were also raised in the Undergraduate committee.

Action: RC to raise these issues with the SEED Programmes Team.

Canvas Implementation

- KT noted that this is the first year the School is using Canvas. Feedback from the UG Committee highlighted a lack of consistency across courses.
- A question was raised about whether timetables could be integrated into Canvas. KT confirmed that Canvas has generally been an improvement on Blackboard for both staff and students so far.
- KT invited further comments and suggestions for improvement.

Auditing and Access Issues

- The EG representative shared technical issues with auditing units: when auditing a class, timetable information was not provided, and students had to contact lecturers directly for details.
- RS explained that Blackboard previously allowed staff and students to audit units, but Canvas functions differently. The team is currently investigating auditing options.
- A rep suggested enrolling students for the first two weeks on units they wish to audit, which would alleviate these issues.

Course Content and Syllabus

- A rep asked whether entire course syllabus should be available on Canvas, noting inconsistency: some lecturers updated the syllabus weekly whereas others did not do so.

Turnitin and Plagiarism Checking

- A rep noted they were unable to check for plagiarism via Turnitin before submission, despite academic staff recommending it.
- KT clarified that students cannot view their plagiarism scores. RS and BM confirmed this, with RS adding that assignment feedback should guide good academic practice to avoid plagiarism.

Staff Training and Permissions

- RS shared an online comment from MT, who noted that although they had experience supporting tutors with Canvas elsewhere, many courses currently have missing information and incorrect permissions. Some students were unable to contribute to discussions.
- RS welcomed support or advice from anyone, noting that both staff and students are still learning the platform.

Submission Issues

- Rep VO – online reported that an assessment that should have been closed remained open, leading to an incorrect submission. They also found it confusing that Canvas allows only one submission, even before the deadline.
- RS and KT noted this issue was also raised in the UG Committee. Blackboard allowed multiple submissions, whereas Canvas does not by default. The team is committed to reviewing this.
- Another rep noted they had been able to resubmit on a formative assignment, suggesting this may depend on instructor settings.
- VO confirmed that their course did not allow resubmission.

Action 3: KT to raise these canvas submission and auditing issues with the E-Learning Team.

- RS added that enabling multiple submissions can override submission deadlines, which is why it may be switched off.
- A rep highlighted potential issues for DASS students, who may be penalised if late adjustments need to be made.
- KT explained that work is submitted, marked, and then staff review individual student profiles; RC confirmed this.
- A rep noted that at UG level they had separate submission areas as a DASS student, which made deadlines and expectations clearer.
- RC cautioned that multiple submission points can increase confusion and create additional places where material could be missed.
- A rep suggested placing a clear note or label on Canvas indicating that all submissions for the module are located in the same place for consistency would be welcomed.

Teaching Environment

- BAM summarised the Padlet comments, highlighting issues relating to international student demographics, integration, and language barriers.
- BAM invited further comments from students regarding the teaching and learning environment, noting that the Padlet comments had been detailed and would be very helpful for review.

Language Requirements

- Rep - MK asked online whether all applicants are required to meet the same language requirements.
- KT confirmed that language requirements are the same for all students.
- RS further clarified that the standard is consistent across all countries and programmes.

Support

- KT summarised the Padlet feedback, noting that the comments were helpful for academics—particularly those regarding event summaries, lecture shoutouts, and engagement with attendees.
    - Some students reported slow staff response times at the start of the academic year. KT and BAM acknowledged this, explaining that it is an extremely busy period for staff.
    - RC noted that staff responded to over 1,000 emails during Welcome Week alone. They encouraged students to visit in person where possible, as this is often the quickest way to receive support. KT emphasised this point.
    - RC added that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) was adjusted depending on email volume to manage workload effectively.

Academic Advising
- Students reported delays in receiving their Academic Advisor (AA) allocation.
- A MIDP representative, Maelys Ramounet, shared that they only received their AA information the previous day, despite it being Week 7.
- Another rep had received their AA three weeks prior but had not yet been contacted, even though their AA is their Programme Director.
- A representative from EIAM noted that international students would ideally like to be assigned their AA by Week 2 of the programme.
- Another rep agreed, suggesting that Week 2 or 3 is optimal for academic navigation and support.
- KT explained that AA allocation is handled at Programme Director (PD) level.
- RC confirmed this and added that a new tool was introduced this year to support early allocation during Welcome Week. Some delays may have occurred due to this transition, but the bulk upload functionality had generally helped speed up the process.
- RS highlighted that during Welcome Week students should still be engaging with staff teaching on their programmes, and this informal contact can serve as an initial support mechanism until advisor allocations are finalised.
- RS shared an online comment from Rep – RH, who reported positive practice on the MEd Psychology of Education course: students were offered an in-person small-group meeting with their Advisor during Welcome Week, which worked very well.
- KT, RS, and BAM thanked reps for sharing examples of good practice.

DASS Support
- Reps raised concerns from students regarding the cost of obtaining medical evidence for DASS, with one student reporting a £60 charge.
- RC explained that DASS requires appropriate medical evidence as part of its assessment process. In some cases, existing evidence may be accepted, but additional documentation is sometimes necessary.
- RC noted that the University has an anticipatory duty and must ensure it has accurate evidence to apply reasonable adjustments.
- RC also highlighted that the Financial Support team may be able to assist students who face financial hardship in obtaining medical evidence.

4. **Any Other Business (AOB)**

- KT acknowledged concerns raised about timetables feeling unbalanced, with some students experiencing long days or several classes in a row. KT explained that timetabling is managed centrally, but individual

issues can be flagged—for example, Programme or Unit Directors can request adjustments from the timetabling team where appropriate. However, KT emphasised that changes are subject to central scheduling constraints.

- A rep noted that for some students, such as commuters, more condensed timetables are appreciated. KT acknowledged the importance of balancing diverse student needs and thanked reps for advocating on behalf of all groups.
- Online comment from online rep – MR, reported that students would like more assessment and exam dates provided in advance, especially for planning travel.
- RS clarified that exams are centrally timetabled.
- MR reported that some students had booked flights before knowing their exam dates and were unsure whether they would miss assessments.
- RC reiterated that students are expected to remain in the country during the January exam period.
- Online comment from rep – MT, noted that she did not receive the meeting notification for the SVC meeting. KT confirmed they would follow this up with the support team to ensure communication is improved for future meetings.
- Online comment from Rep – MR explained that they were asked to sign up as a rep late and received communications later than ideal. They were notified of their successful application by the SU with limited time remaining to apply for the rep grant.
- BAM clarified that once students complete the training, they are officially reps, even if communication from the SU arrives later.
- MR noted there had been mixed messaging from different departments on this point. KT noted that they would look into this discrepancy.
- KT thanked all attendees—both in person and online—for their contributions and engagement.

5. Date of next meeting

TBC. Will take place in Semester 2, during Week 3 of teaching in March 2026.

6. Comments added to Padlet after meeting

None reported.

Summary of Actions List

Action Number	Agenda Item	Action	Lead	Deadline	Status/Notes
1	3	Action 1: BM to provide feedback to the Students' Union regarding the positive reception of the rep training.	BM		
2	3	Action 2: RC to feedback these suggestions to the Communications Team.	RC		
3	3	Action 3: KT to raise Canvas submission and auditing issues	KT		

		with the E-Learning Team.			