

The University of Manchester

Student Representation Staff Co-ordinators' Forum Meeting Wednesday 26th January 2011 - Notes from the meeting

Present: Chris Ashworth, Janet Boyd, Christine Burns, Siobhan Cartwright, Johanna Cooper, Kandy Diamond, Janice Dodds, Janet Ellis, Fiona Frazer, Helen Franklin, Miriam Graham, Joanne Jolley, Marcia Ody, Faye Ratcliffe, Charlotte Raynes, Ceri Wilson, Jenny Wragge (for part).

1. Welcome

Marcia Ody (Teaching and Learning Manager, TLSO) welcomed members to the first SRSCF meeting of the New Year.

2. National Students Survey (NSS)

Jenny Wragge (Student Experience Office, Student Support and Services) talked to the meeting about the current NSS. The Students' Union has contacted student representatives to remind them about completing the survey and Co-ordinators were requested to encourage their student reps to do this and to encourage their peers to do so too. Jenny distributed a letter which had been sent out to students.

Students could be encouraged to fill in the survey by informing them of issues which had been raised in the past in the NSS which the University had taken on board and made changes in order to improve the student experience. Such examples included the introduction of the Feedback to Students Policy; developments in IT such as £140,000 investment in more PCs, refurbishment of PC clusters and more wireless printing facilities in the library; and the introduction of Humanities student social spaces for students to meet.

3. Notes from the last SRSCF meeting held on 26th May 2010.

The notes were accepted as an accurate record.

Matters arising:

a. Co-ordinators' Support

It was requested again that if Co-ordinators have any particular central contacts in Student Services and IT Services, etc. which they would like details of, they should contact Miriam Graham so that a list of useful contacts could be drawn up. This item was originally requested by Co-ordinators at a previous meeting.

ACTION: Co-ordinators to send any ideas of useful central contacts to m.graham@manchester.ac.uk

b. PGT/PGR Representation

The Students' Union has started to make a list of PGT/PGR co-ordinators. A reminder was given for co-ordinators with specific responsibility for PG

representation to contact Miriam Graham with information about the particular PG representation systems within their area. A pro forma was available for co-ordinators to use for this purpose.

ACTION: PGT/PGR Co-ordinators to complete a pro forma with details about the student rep systems in their areas to m.graham@manchester.ac.uk

c. Manchester Leadership Programme (MLP)

Co-ordinators were reminded that they were able to sign off student reps' hours towards the MLP for time spent by the students in rep activities, such as at SSLC meetings. (The Students Union can sign off student rep hours spent at rep training, towards the MLP). Co-ordinators are requested to send details of any student rep MLP hours they have signed off to Miriam Graham so that we have an idea of the number of student rep hours being accounted for towards the MLP.

ACTION: Co-ordinators to provide details of any MLP hours signed off to m.graham@manchester.ac.uk

4. Updates from the Students' Union

- **Student rep training**

Training has been completed for this academic year. Numbers trained were slightly less than last year, although slightly more PG reps attended. The items covered in training which the reps enjoyed most were the opportunity to meet other reps; an explanation of their role and the outline of the University structure and representation systems.

Reps would like more information on the specific structure of representation within their own Schools/Faculties. They would also appreciate more specific contacts within their Schools; information on committees and structures; who to raise issues with; and how to use surveys to obtain responses from their peers.

- **SU developments**

UMSU is currently undergoing a major restructure; the management team was disbanded last summer and a new director has been appointed. A full-time representation co-ordinator role is likely to be introduced. If the new co-ordinator role is not established and in place by the start of the 2001/12 academic year, UMSU may have to 'buy in' student rep training from other SUs or the NUS. (Charlotte Raynes will be away from UMSU on maternity leave during this period). There may consequently not be as many training sessions as usual but the University and UMSU have a responsibility for providing training to student reps so it will have to be ensured that training does take place.

Future developments in UMSU include a greater focus on the PGT area and on online resources, plus specific PGR rep training and online resources.

5. Good practice in student representation in the School of Physics and Astronomy

A paper (compiled by the EPS Faculty Officer) had been distributed outlining activities and processes in student representation within Physics and Astronomy. It was noted that the student reps and Faculty Officer are very engaged in the process and the staff are also very committed to supporting student representation. Discussion took place on the areas of good practice identified and it was suggested that a list of suggested minimum standards for representation within Schools could be drawn up to help Schools.

ACTION: Marcia Ody and Miriam Graham to look into minimum standards list

6. Good practice in student representation in the School of Medicine

Siobhan Cartwright and Helen Franklin shared with the group about student rep activities within Medicine. The School holds three SSLC meetings per year, with the co-ordinator meeting with reps two weeks prior to the meetings in order to find out the items which the reps would like on the agenda. The School has three programme reps from years 3 and 4 (who undertake a leadership role within the rep structures) and also year reps – two per year (or one from the Foundation year).

Following quite a negative meeting between staff and students, Siobhan set up a workshop for student reps to explain and share information about the higher education sector, the School and the operation of the SSLC. A second workshop followed which included videos of what the QAA did. Both workshops gave students a greater understanding of the HE sector, the School, committee structures and staff and also gave them an understanding of how they could help other students and improve the student experience.

Dr Liz Cordingly also put together a presentation and workshop to help student reps get the most out of their SSLCs ('Getting the most out of your committee') which was very successful.

Discussion took place within the group and it was found that most Schools did not hold their own School-specific training for reps (although Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work had done so this year).

7. Issues raised about student representation in the University briefing paper and the SU submission for the forthcoming QAA Audit

A paper had been distributed for information highlighting the main issues around representation which had been raised in the University's briefing paper to the QAA and the SU's student submission.

8. Any other business

- **New Directorate for the Student Experience**

A new Directorate has been developed within which the TLSO will sit. There is a current review taking place of how the Directorate communicates with students. The

issue of how we can make student representation across the institution more effective is also due to be discussed.

- **SSLC Terms of Reference**

Co-ordinators were asked to share any examples of the terms of reference of their SSLC.

ACTION: Co-ordinators to send any examples of SSLC terms of reference to m.graham@manchester.ac.uk

- **UMSU Blackboard module**

Charlotte Raynes reported that the proposed Blackboard modules for student reps would not be being pursued at present due to the UMSU restructure.

- **UMSU STARs award**

A new proposal for an award system that supports, encourages and rewards good academic representation practice had been introduced by UMSU. However, this would not be being pursued at present.

9. Date of next meeting

At previous meetings, the idea had been discussed of having an extended SRSCF meeting in May/June which would include academic staff and student reps. As this would take some organizing, it was agreed that an email should be sent out to co-ordinators to see if there was general support for this to take place.

ACTION: Miriam Graham to email co-ordinators.