Student Leadership Team (SLT) Meeting Minutes

Date: Saturday 12 October 2024, held online

Attendees:

- Natalie Baker, President SLT (Chair)
- Andrew Wilson, Deputy President SLT
- Julie Catterall, England Rep.
- Nichola Connolly, VP Student Rep.
- Jack Flaherty, FASS Rep (Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences)
- Charon Gates, WELS Rep. (Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies)
- Scott Harvey-Whittle, STEM Rep. (Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)
- Isabelle Hoyet, International Rep.
- Katie Hickmott, VP Academic Student Voice
- Andrew Kolapo, Student Member of Council
- Ross Thorne, VP Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

STAFF:

- Gabriella Cull, Head of Executive Support (Live tweets)
- Ciara Linehan, Projects Officer
- Dan Moloney, Director of Engagement
- Samantha Smeraglia, Admin, Executive Support (Minutes)

.

Apologies:

- Olivia Hughes, VP Community & Engagement
- Beth Pacey, Chief Executive

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Introduction.
2. Conference Feedback Presentation.
3. Student Issues Reporting Tool.
4. Discussion on SLT Priority Areas.
5. SLT Priority Areas Workshop.

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1   As Chair, Natalie Baker opened the meeting, with Gabby live-tweeting. Everyone was thanked for completing the correspondence papers on MS Teams and there were no minutes to approve from the last meeting, given that this was the first meeting of the new SLT's two-year term.

2. CONFERENCE 2024 FEEDBACK (Thomas Mitchell)

2.1   The meeting started with Tom's presentation on "Conference Feedback", due to scheduling changes. Tom was unable to join live due to internet issues but provided a recorded presentation.

2.2   The presentation covered:

- Overview and recap of Conference 2024.
- Key information and highlights from the student delegate survey.
- Financial summary and comparison with previous conferences.
- Voting and attendance records.
- Recommendations for future student conferences.

ACTIONS

2.3   Tom to answer any further questions via email or Teams.

2.4   Gabby to share Tom's presentation slides with all attendees.

3. STUDENT ISSUES REPORTING TOOL (Gabriella Cull)

3.1   Gabby presented the Student Issues Reporting Tool.

3.2   The online tool allows students to post issues affecting them, which can then be upvoted or downvoted by other students. Examples of past issues discussed included "tutor inconsistencies" and "module delivery for neurodivergent students".

3.3   There was discussion on how best to increase the wider student population's engagement with the Issues tool, including promoting it on social media, via forums, and during student-led sessions.

ACTIONS

3.4   Gabby to discuss a social media campaign with Jasmine Ewart.

3.5   Charon to share the tool in the forums she moderates.

3.6   Isabelle to promote the tool in the international forum, newsletter, and student meetups.

3.7   Nichola, Julie and Charon to work on the perimenopause support project, including setting up a drop-in group.

3.8   Natalie suggested that all signpost the tool on social media, (within the spaces that students are engaging), to signpost student complaints.

3.9   Ross to circulate the tool with the Disabled Student Group.

3.10 Andrew to suggest to Andrew Evans the creation of a more visible link to the tool on the main OU Students website.

4. DISCUSSION ON PRIORITY AREAS

4.1   Dan Moloney led the discussion on the priority areas for the SLT.

4.2   The priority areas include:

- Student Support;

- Student Well-being;

- Academic Experience;

- Neurodivergent Student Experience.

4.3   Suggestions were made to differentiate the student support team and the student well-being priorities more clearly, so the distinction can be more easily understood.

ACTIONS

4.4   Dan to update the wording of the priority areas based on SLT feedback.

4.5   All SLT Members to brainstorm objectives and potential projects for each priority area during the workshop.

5 DISCUSSION ON STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM (SST) SERVICES

5.1   Discussed the need to extend the opening hours of the SST to evenings and Saturdays, to improve availability for international and working students.

5.2   Suggested using alternative ways of contacting (Teams, Skype, WhatsApp), to limit prohibitive telephone costs and overcome challenges of contact for international students.

5.3   SST staff need to be skilled with consistent training on where to signpost other forms of support e.g. Individual Rep, perimenopause groups etc.

5.4   Staff need better training in disability awareness and an understanding of the challenges faced by neurodiverse students.

5.5   Specialist expertise on particular issues would be helpful within the SSTs.

6. DISCUSSION ON STUDENT WELL-BEING

6.1   The focus for this priority would be a broader EDI remit with an emphasis on well-being.

6.2   Priotise creating a stronger sense of community through more meet-ups at various times and days, with a larger number of meet-up hosts.

6.3   Discussed allowing students to share their successes in various formats, such as videos, poems, etc. To promote positive outcomes.

6.4   Also proposed was holding regular well-being events, such as well-being weeks with a focus on different areas.

6.5   Discussed the importance of the peri-menopause/menopause support project and the need for consistency in the disability profile information provided to tutors.

6.8   The importance of using signposts to make relevant information easier to find for students was highlighted. As remote learners, students are more likely to give up if they cannot find the support needed.

6.9   Discussed how technology, such as chatbots, can make signposting more consistent.

7. ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE DISCUSSION

7.1   The focus was on advocating for best practices in teaching delivery to create a consistent academic student experience.

7.2   The need for consistency across a range of areas was highlighted:

- Learning materials;
- Tutorials;
- Module materials;
- Engagement with tutors;
- Support students receive from tutors;
- Signposting to available resources;
- Deadlines for feedback from TMAs.

7.3   The idea of increasing resources available to students was discussed, including:

- Digital archives;
- Research platforms.

7.4 Need to protect the curriculum as mandated by OU students in 2024 Conference vote.

8. DISCUSSION ON THE NEURODIVERGENT STUDENT EXPERIENCE

8.1   With a focus on identifying and dealing with Neurodivergent barriers to learning and how to improve student retention rates.

8.2   The OU needs ways to help remote learners feel more supported so that fewer disconnect and leave their studies.

8.3   More information is needed on the Open University landing page for new and prospective neurodivergent students.

8.4   There is a need to increase the frequency and improve signposting of DSA webinars.

8.5   SSTs need to be proactive in engaging with students once they have submitted their disability support form, to understand what each student needs to support study success.

8.6   Tutors and ALs need training to provide tailored student support.

8.7   The idea of an in-house ND assessor for the OU was discussed, to alleviate NHS restrictions on ND assessments and improve wait times.

8.8   International and non-diagnosed students need more support.

8.9   Advocate for provision of alternative study material formats.

9. SLT PRIORITY AREAS – Communication and implementation

9.1   Discussion of the timeline for publicising the new SLT priorities and initiatives and creation of a presentable document for internal and external communication.

9.2   Also mapping out project timelines and review points.

ACTIONS

9.3   Dan will finalise changes in the language for each priority area and coordinate the promotion with the communications team.

9.4   All SLT to submit any additional ideas and feedback to Dan.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1   Ciara requested confirmation that SLT's personal email addresses could be retained for contact purposes.

10.2   A discussion on Tutor awards and Volunteer recognition was postponed.

ACTIONS
11. NEXT MEETING

Date: 14-16 February 2025 (to be held Face-to-Face)

ACTIONS

11.1   All SLT Members: Confirm attendance and accommodation requirements at the time of the request.

11.2   Those that do not respond by the deadline will need to make their own arrangements.

11.3   Please let Gabby and team know in advance if you need any further adjustments or additional details!

ACTIONS LOG TABLE

Item in the Minutes	ACTIONS	Action holder
2.3	Conference Feedback: Tom to answer any further questions via email or Teams.	Thomas Mitchell
2.4	Gabby to share Tom's presentation slides with all attendees.	Gabby Cull
3.4	<u>Student Issues Report tool:</u> Gabby to discuss a social media campaign with Jasmine Ewart.	Gabby Cull
3.5	Charon to share the tool in the forums she moderates.	Charon
3.6	Isabelle to promote the tool in the international forum, newsletter, and student meetups.	Isabelle Hoyet
3.7	Nichola, Julie and Charon to work on the perimenopause support project, including setting up a drop-in group.	Nichola Connolly Julie Catte Charon Gates
3.8	Natalie suggested that all signpost the tool on social media, (within the spaces that students are engaging), to signpost students with complaints.	All
3.9	Ross to circulate the tool with the Disabled Student Group.	Ross Thorne
3.10	Andrew to suggest to Andrew Evans the creation of a more visible link to the tool on the main OU Students website.	Andrew Wilson
4.4	SLT Priority areas: Dan to update the wording of the priority areas based on SLT feedback.	Dan Moloney
9.1/9.2	Develop projects and plan from workshop outputs	Dan Moloney, Natalie Baker, Andrew Wilson
9.3	SLT priority areas communications plan: Dan will finalise changes in the language for each priority area and coordinate the promotion with the communications team.	Dan Moloney
10.1	AOB: Collect and confirm personal email addresses.	Ciara Linehan
10.2	Follow up on tutor awards and volunteering recognition in SLT's MS Teams space.	Natalie Baker
11.1	Feb 2025 SLT meeting: All SLT Members: Confirm attendance and accommodation requirements at the time of the request.	All

11.2	Those that do not respond by the deadline will need to make their own arrangements.	All
11.3	Please let Gabby and team know in advance if you need any further adjustments or additional details!	All