**Student Welfare Committee**

Tuesday 10 February 2015

14.00 – 17.00

SALC 10

Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus

**Minutes**

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| **Present:** | | Professor Denis Wright (Chairman), Dr Simon Archer, Dr Sharon Bolton,  Mrs Mary Bown, Mr Nigel Cooke, Dr Mike Emerson, Dr Sarah Freedman,  Mr Charles Gallagher, Mr Gerry Greyling, Professor Joanna Haigh, Mr Brett  Harmony, Mr Christopher Kaye, Dr Arash Mostofi, Ms Claire O’Brien,  Ms Rosie Summerhayes, Miss Kelly Swaby, Dr Lynda White,  Rev Andrew Willson |
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| **In attendance** | | Miss Amanda James (Secretary), Ms Kani Kamari and Ms Leyla Okha (from HR) |
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| **Apologies:** | | Dr Mike Bluck, Dr Joanne Harris, Dr Michael Jones, Mr Colin Kerr, Dr Julie King, Mr Andrew Keenan, Mrs Leigh Turvey, Mr Malcolm McLean, Mr Neil Mosely |

**Agenda Item**

1. **Apologies for absence**

Miss James (Secretary) read apologies from those listed.

1. **Welcome new members**

The Chairman welcomed Dr Lorraine Craig as the new Senior Tutor’s Representative to the committee.

1. **Harassment, Bullying and Victimisation Policy (Paper A)**

Ms Kani Kamari presented this paper with her colleague Ms Leyla Okha, explaining that Section 6 was the only one that was specific to students. Ms Kamari identified the themes from other committees; confidentiality; dispute resolution; the meaning of zero tolerance and managing the aftermath.

The committee discussed the policy. There was concern that while much of the Policy could also be relevant to students the references were very much work-based and a separate policy for staff and students (as for Alcohol and Substance Misuse) would be more appropriate. Professor Wright agreed to liaise with HR (KK to forward word version of the existing policy) and to discuss with Professor Humphries and Mr Pateman on the best way forward.

**ACTION: DW and KK**

1. **Terms of Reference and Membership (Paper B)**

Professor Wright gave the background as to why the new Terms of Reference were required; following the discussion at VPAGE in December, and in line with the recommendations of the Student Wellbeing Task Group, it was proposed that the Student Support and Wellbeing Committee replace the Student Welfare Committee.

The terms of reference therefore needed to be updated and whilst the constitution remained largely unchanged, there were some differences in reporting; for example the new Committee will report to the Provost Board rather than Senate.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting – Tuesday 17 June 2014 (Paper C)**

Mr Christopher Kaye advised that Miss Marissa Lewis was not present at the last meeting; Miss Kelly Swaby however did attend. The minutes have been corrected to reflect this.

The Committee confirmed that otherwise the minutes of the previous meeting were accurate.

1. **Matters arising (updates)**
2. Minute 5. (i) No progress; Professor Wright confirmed they were still looking into the provision of postgraduate welfare rooms near the South Kensington campus..
3. Minute 5. (ii) Credit control communications to students – Dr White confirmed that no serious cases had been brought to the College tutors and more thought was clearly going into the procedure. A good dialogue now existed between Credit Control management and those dealing directly with students (Senior and PG Tutors, etc.).
4. Minute 5. (iii) Special exam requirement – Professor Wright summarised the difficulties with the current system (aspects of the Equalities Act not being properly considered for example) and proposed to Registry that a ‘virtual panel’ be assembled to scrutinise cases; the panel would include Mrs Mary Bown and other advisers. Mr Dean Pateman had suggested a group be formed to look into this and provide a report for QAEC.

**ACTION: DW**

1. Minute 5. (v) Guidance for students on the use of social media – Mr Pateman has provided feedback referring to the need for a more formal approach to this issue. Professor Wright will discuss this with Mr Pateman to ensure the guidance considers both academic offences/integrity and the use of social media and is included as part of a student bullying and harassment policy.

**ACTION: DW**

1. Minute 5. (vi) Draft ‘Student Mental Health Policy and Procedure’ – still pending

**ACTION: DW**

1. Minute 10. Student Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy – approved by Senate (October). Professor Wright thanked Dr Freedman for her efforts to clarify the problem of ‘legal highs’. The policy now states that misuse of substances includes those that can cause harm, not just that they are illegal.
2. **Student Welfare Seminar**

This is scheduled for Wednesday, 4 March 2015. There will be two themes; living with SPLD as an engineering student and Mental health. [Note: Seminar subsequently postponed until the Summer Term]

1. **Student Support Fund**

Mr Gerry Greyling provided the Committee with a summary of activity for the Fund to date. He confirmed that application numbers (48) were lower than in the previous year (65) but that this was within expected levels given the revised eligibility framework. The majority of awards had been made to Year 5 and 6 medical students. The average value of an award was £693.

Professor Haig asked about funding for students with childcare arrangements which had previously been paid from a specific budget but, since this financial year, has been incorporated in the Student Support Fund. Mr Greyling advised that the revised arrangements allowed students with childcare responsibilities to access funds without the limitations of the having to use specific childcare providers and that the SSF is therefore able to help more students. The number of applications had not been affected by the change in funding arrangements.

1. **Departmental Disability Officer forum**

Mrs Mary Bown confirmed that sessions were well attended and good feedback was being received from officers.

1. **Disabled Students Allowance**

Further draft guidance was received from the government in December and more was due in January on how the changes will be implanted. Essentially the changes will be phased in over two years, but there will be an ever increasing responsibility on institutions to provide support for students and make their teaching more accessible. Both Professor Wright and Mrs Mary Bown see the changes as an opportunity to make the system more equal at the point of application for all students, including international students.

1. **Student – Tutor (STARFISH) Pilot**

Professor Wright confirmed that three departments had rolled out Starfish, that Mechanical Engineering were trialling the system, and that several other departments, including Life Sciences are interested.

1. **Residential Life Committee report**

Dr Mike Bluck was not in attendance to present a report but Dr Arash Mostofi summarised that the start of session had been a lively one; he asked that the Union took the message back to clubs and societies that there were too many alcohol related incidents. An unprecedented number of College disciplinary cases had been heard so far this year..

Mr Nigel Cooke acknowledged his professional involvement representing in such cases and he confirmed that senior club members were working hard to address binge drinking and the ‘lad’ culture.

Dr Mostafi explained that there had been an increase of cannabis use in Halls and that there were a number of on-going mental health cases that Wardens were involved in.

Ms Rosie Summerhayes advised that there would be a Suicide Prevention workshop on 24 April 2015; 40 places would be available to staff. The event is likely to be oversubscribed, hence Ms Claire O’Brien suggested a ‘train the trainer’ cascading of the material. Dr Emerson supported this, requesting further guidance for Senior Tutors on this issue.

1. **Certification of students who are ill during an exam**

Dr Freedman explained that if invigilators (with support of the person in charge of the eexam) allow a student to leave an exam because they are ill, this should suffice without the need for the Health Centre to approve the decision.

However, if a student is unwell before the exam and requires a Health Centre appointment, the Centre opens at 08:30am and exams are not usually until 10:00am or later. If students have an on-going health condition, they can be exempted a few days beforehand.

1. **Health Centre News (Paper D)**

Dr Freedman presented her report and highlighted the Drugs Seminar (Legal Highs); members are to advise Dr Freedman should they wish to attend.

1. **Student Health and Wellbeing Task Group – outcomes (Papers E and F)**

Professor Wright confirmed the proposal to appoint a Mental Health Adviser to strengthen mental health support across College.

He also confirmed that the Provost Board had approved all task group recommendations not requiring money, with all other recommendations being subject to the Planning Round.

A discussion of the changes implied by the documents to the service the Health Centre can provide followed. The Committee were concerned that 700 plus students (registered in Acton) would be affected and would not be seen by the Health Centre if they were ill on the South Kensington campus during the day; they would have to visit their local GP and take time away from College to do so. Committee members commented that this did not seem to have the wellbeing of students at heart and the consensus was that this would impact on attendance and potentially stress for students who were unwell.

Dr Freedman commented that there would also be an impact on the Health Centre as staff could face redundancies for example as NHS funding for the service would be affected.

1. **AOB**

There was no additional business raised at this meeting.

1. **Date of next scheduled meeting**

Tuesday, 09 June 2015; Time: 14:00-16:00; Room: SALC 10.