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**Meeting:** COUNCIL/SENATE/STUDENTS' UNION COMMITTEE

**Date and Time:** Tuesday 3 November 2020 at 2.45pm

**Venue:** Via MS Teams

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Present:

Professor I White (Chair)	Vice-Chancellor and President
Dr M Harney	Appointed by Council
Professor P Lambert	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)
Mr F Masala	President, The SU (from minute 1234)
Ms K Robinson	Elected by Senate
Dr J Troyer	Elected by Senate
Ms A Willingham	Education Officer, The SU
Mr G Barnstable	Student Representative
Ms K Maluta	Student Representative

In Attendance:

Professor A Heath	Academic Director, CLT
Dr F KH Ho	Postgraduate Officer, The SU (minute no 1234)
Mrs J Loveys	Director Accommodation & Hospitality Services
Ms J Medland-Kelly	Executive Officer
Mr A McLaughlin	Chief Executive, The SU (from minute 1234)
Mr A Payne	Director of Student Services
Ms A Pater	Secretary
Ms E Pollinger	Student Complaints Manager (future secretary)
Mr T Sawko	Sport Officer, The SU (for minute 1234)
Ms R Sheer	Acting Director of Academic Registry
Dr C Wilson	Vice-President (Student Experience)

Apologies:

Mr T Hollingsworth	Appointed by Council
Ms C Morgan	Student Representative

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**ACTION**

**1228. CHAIR'S WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the newly elected members. He thanked everyone for all the additional work undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially The SU.

**1229. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest to declare apart from all being students, staff or Council members of the University.

**1230. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee noted its composition and terms of reference (Paper CSSU20/21-001). It was NOTED that recommendations had been made by the Senate Effectiveness Review which would be discussed at a future meeting.

**Sec**

**1231. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2020 (Paper CSSU20/21-002) were APPROVED as a correct record.

**1232. MATTERS ARISING**

(1) Minute 1224 – Muslim Prayer Room

The Director of Accommodation & Hospitality Services (DoAHS) advised that a new space in Norwood House was now being used as the Prayer Room. She explained the arrangements being made and that the Islamic Society seemed pleased with it.

(2) Minute 1215 (2) – Water fountains

The DoAHS explained that butler-sink style water fountains had been installed in all hospitality areas and other foyer sites were being discussed with Estates colleagues, such as East building and Chancellors' building. 122 other water fountains were also available across campus.

**1233. UPDATE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING ISSUES**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) gave an oral report about all the changes to on-line teaching and assessment since the last meeting, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Academic standards had continued to be met, academic appeals had reduced, and Bath was ranked second in England in the NSS. He thanked the SU, CLT, Registry and other colleagues for all their hard work, especially the productive working relationship between those involved. The student survey undertaken in week 4 had provided generally positive feedback, although some issues had been raised regarding consistency of in-person-teaching (IPT) and staff/student workloads. He explained that the University was still on a learning curve and challenges still remained.

The Committee NOTED the update.

**1234. STUDENTS' UNION BUSINESS**

(1) **Top Ten Issues 2020/21**

Fritz Ho and Tom Sawko also attended for this item. Annie Willingham presented an overview of the SU's Top Ten Issues for 2020/21 (Paper CSSU20/21-003); she noted that the SU had aimed to make these relevant to COVID-19 issues and also the most vulnerable students. She thanked the University for allocating a named manager for each of the Top Ten.

There was a discussion about the implications of the aim for 10% of staff and students to be trained in Mental Health First Aid, as this was a proprietary product; it was noted that other training had been carried out for hundreds of staff.

The Committee NOTED and welcomed the Top Ten report.

(2) **Prevention and Early Intervention in Postgraduate Mental Health**

Fritz Ho presented Paper CSSU20/21-004. He emphasised the need for a more dynamic strategy and that PGT and PGR students had different needs. It was

noted that doctoral students needed to be made aware of the likely challenges of their studies from an early stage.

- Recommendation 1 – *Review and update the University’s current mental health strategy to include preventative actions in addition to supporting provision.*  
It was NOTED that the DVC’s Health and Wellbeing Steering Group would be considering this, as well as recommendations 3 and 4. The Director of Student Services reported on FIKA resources for mental fitness, see <https://www.fika.community/>
- Recommendation 2 – *Provide early clear messages and access to support through the Careers Service to postgraduate students, in particular doctoral students, in the creation of early-career plans.*  
It was NOTED that careers and skills training were very important. Dr Wilson reported that the Employability Strategy Group would include a PGR strand to focus on these issues, which would include Dr Ho.
- Recommendation 3 – *Continue to monitor and act upon the impact of Covid-19 on PGT and doctoral students and how this may contribute to declining mental health and affecting future career.*  
It was NOTED that the DVC’s Health and Wellbeing Steering Group was working on this.
- Recommendation 4 – *Support the recruitment of peer mentors from alumni to ensure PGT students receiving academic and wellbeing support from peer mentorship.*  
It was NOTED that the DVC’s Health and Wellbeing Steering Group would be considering this.
- Recommendation 5 – *Provide training for PhD supervisors on how to support doctoral students to manage their workload and career expectation.*  
It was noted that 5 and 6 each had a UEB lead allocated.
- Recommendation 6 – *All doctoral supervisors to receive the Mental Health First Aid training to prepare them for discussions with their supervisees about mental health, and to signpost to appropriate support services (SU Top 10 20/21).*

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Dr Ho for his excellent and well-researched report.

### **(3) Students on Casual Contracts and the Furlough Scheme**

Francesco Masala presented Paper CSSU20/21-005. He expressed his gratitude for all the support for these students so far. However he had found some inconsistency across departments about how the guidance was applied and felt more work was needed to address this. He requested that Heads of Department should be asked to prepare rotas two weeks in advance for these students. He had spoken to the Director of Human Resources and was aware this would cause an administrative burden. Issues noted in discussion included:

- that the Hardship fund was also available to these students, although demands on this scheme were very high;
- that a new scheme for these students had just been approved;
- That alumni were being very generous in responding to a recent call for funds.

**ACTION**

The Vice-Chancellor agreed this issue was being taken seriously and that the Director of Human Resources was following up the issues

**DoHR**

The Committee NOTED the report and the action being proposed.

**(4) Top Ten issue: Universal Transgender policy**

Francesco Masala presented Paper CSSU20/21-006. He said The SU wanted to encourage a supportive environment; several universities such as Cardiff had adopted Transgender policies, covering both staff and students. He was aware that the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was developing a gender identity policy, but this seemed to be more staff-facing. He suggested a working group of staff and students be set up to develop a Universal Transgender policy. Dr Wilson agreed that a working group seemed a good idea and could be discussed at a meeting the following week; she said that the Director of Human Resources was the lead for this Top Ten issue. The Chair noted that Alex Butler should also be involved.

**DoHR**

The Committee NOTED the report and the action being proposed.

**1235. UNDERGRADUATE ASYLUM SEEKER SCHOLARSHIPS - FEASIBILITY STUDY**

The Chair expressed his congratulations that the University was about to be designated a 'University of Sanctuary'.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) introduced Paper CSSU20/21-007 and explained that an affordability study for a scholarship as proposed by Amnesty had been undertaken by Mike Nicholson, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, and Jenny Medland-Kelly, informed by data from Prof Rebecca Murray. They had tested its feasibility in the current climate with the significant income gap which the University faced due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19. The cost was likely to be £100,000 for just one student and the additional funding would have to be diverted away from existing provision. DDAR were finding fund-raising difficult at the moment. He was very sympathetic to the sentiment behind the request however. He added that a large number of refugee/asylum seeker students were receiving support. It was difficult for asylum seekers to gain the grades needed for UG entry at Bath, but easier at PG level if they had already undertaken a UG degree elsewhere in the UK.

Francesco Masala expressed his disappointment as a lot of work had gone into making the proposal. Prof Lambert acknowledged this and said the issue could be looked at further and discussed with Amnesty.

The Committee NOTED that this issue would continue to be investigated.

**PVC(L&T)**

**1236. ANNUAL REPORT ON STUDENT CASEWORK 2019/20**

Dr Kemp attended to present papers CSSU20/21 - 008-011. She explained the changes in oversight and support for these areas since April 2019. A new Student Casework Manager had been employed in August 2019 who had transformed these procedures and monitoring was much improved.

## **ACTION**

(1) Fitness to Study

It was NOTED that this procedure was yet to be reviewed; early intervention in these cases was very important.

**DoSS**

(2) Fitness to Practise

It was NOTED that this procedure was yet to be reviewed; there was new guidance from the Office for Students.

**DoPPC**

(3) Student Discipline

Dr Kemp reported that expectations of student behaviour were now more explicit, but that misconduct cases had been increasing rapidly this semester because of COVID-19 restrictions. 135 disciplinary cases were being processed in this semester, against 33 at the same point the previous year, with an additional 52 reported cases the previous weekend. Appeals were also increasing: a total of 10 had been received for the year 2019/20, but seven already by the start of November 2020/21. The Student Casework Manager had now been seconded for a year to work solely as a Student Discipline Manager.

(4) Student Complaints

There had not been any large increase but Dr Kemp was reviewing the procedures and support available; a part-time fixed-term post of Student Complaints Manager had recently been filled.

The Committee NOTED the reports.

### **1237. DATES OF MEETINGS**

The programme of meetings for 2020/21 was noted as follows (all meetings at 2.15pm):

- Thursday 3 December 2020
- Thursday 18 February 2021
- Tuesday 20 April 2021

### **1238. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution and the SU Officers in particular for their excellent reports.

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The meeting concluded at 4.10pm

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