

Graduate College
Notes of the Syndicate Meeting
Held at 12.00 noon on Monday 15th June 2015

Present: Claire Povah (Principal), Arooj Siddiqui (PGBoard), Jane Hulland (Administrator), David Townsend (PGBoard Sports), Simon Vaukins (FASS Administrator), James Groves, Martin Colclough (College Dean), Yvonne Battle-Felton (Assistant Dean), Joy Payne (Residences Assistant), Lucyann Featherstone (Residence Officer), Candace Davies (Residence Manager), Paul Dolby (Vice-Principal), Charles Gell (PGBoard Treasurer).

Notes

1. Apologies

- Gareth Ellis (Venue Manager), Keith Bevan, Sven Crone, Jess Walmsley (The Base), Maria Michael (Assistant Dean)

2. Receive and note College Syndicate terms of reference

- Revised terms of reference received. Noted that quoracy for the meetings of Syndicate was 15 members and this had not been achieved, however the meeting could continue as Syndicate was not being asked to take decisions.

3. Principal's Welcome and Report – incorporating news on the College refurbishment/Review of the Year/Review of Graduate College

- Thanks were extended to all those present for attending today.
- This is the first syndicate we have held in quite a long time – noted that there was a need to look at how to re-engage the SCR.

Refurbishment

- The Principal reported on the ongoing refurbishment, it was noted that:
 - the 2013/14 survey of students had identified preferred requirements for the space. In essence, a mini learning zone with social space and games room.
 - The college was working closely with the PGBoard Sports officer to ensure the games room equipment was appropriate. Equipment will include table tennis, traditional darts, UK Pool table and soft tip darts.
 - Members of the PGBoard had been involved in agreeing the furnishings for the space.
 - Slight delay in relation to the handover date for the refurbished space, mid-July was the current handover date.

Review of the Year

- The Principal presented the Review of the Year which had been updated to focus on events and achievements to date during 2014/15. It will be available for incoming Postgraduates and sent to the Admissions team. Muren Zhang

(Assistant Dean) would be asked to translate the document into Mandarin/Cantonese for the benefit of sponsors and parents.

Review of Graduate College

Syndicate received the paper as submitted to CSEC. The Principal reported that:

- the recommendation for a review had been made following the review of the colleges.
- the Principal confirmed that she had been asked to conduct the review.
- support for conducting the review had been requested, however given the upcoming QAA HER support for the review from Secretariat was not available.
- Consideration would be given to engaging a PhD student to carry out secondary research using survey data and historical review reports.
- the Vice-Principal had agreed to chair the focus groups.

During discussions the College review recommendation around allowing undergraduates to maintain their college allegiance when they become postgraduates was raised. JG asked whether the review would consider this recommendation.

It was noted that:

- this recommendation was being considered by a separate group chaired by Professor Chetwynd.
- The group had not yet reported back on its findings.
- One of the original reasons for establishing a Graduate College was because the needs of postgraduates differed from those of undergraduates.

The PGBoard members present noted that a motion had been voted on by the JCRs around whether to allow postgraduates who had been undergraduates to continue to play for their undergraduate sports team. The motion had not been carried.

During further discussions the question was raised as to whether the rise of four year Masters programmes had led to an increase in the number of undergraduates wanting to move to Graduate College in their fourth year? (NB: students on a 3+1 undergraduate course do not move to Graduate College in their fourth year, they remain with their undergraduate college for the duration of their programme). It was suggested by a member of syndicate that fourth year undergraduates could be invited to become 'associate members' of Graduate College. It was also noted that students on a four year Masters programme would not receive information about the college as they would be tagged as undergraduate within the student record system.

ACTION: College Principal and College Administrator to discuss with Student Registry if four year Masters students can be identified in the records system.

4. Report from the College Dean (incorporating appointment of new Assistant Dean)

The College Dean reported that:

- during the year the majority of deanery matters had in the most part been resolved through mediation and informal discussions.
- He had conducted a review of the Graduate College deanery system and requirements. A comparison had been made with the system in one of the undergraduate colleges and key College staff had been involved. As a result of the review the role of the Assistant Deans' within the College was being revised to reflect the needs of the College.
- The Assistant Deans' role would focus on the three key areas of discipline, welfare and day-to-day college activities.
- The refinements would be put in place by the end of 2014/15.
- Three of the four current Assistant Deans would be continuing in their roles in 2015/16. Interviews for the fourth Assistant Dean were taking place later in the day.

The Principal thanked the Dean for his report and for his work throughout the year. The Principal reported that MC had agreed to remain as Graduate College Dean for a further year to ensure that the revised focus for the Assistant Deans within Graduate College was successfully embedded.

5. Report from the Postgraduate Board

The PG Board Sports Officer, David Townsend reported that:

- the PG Board was now back to a full team of officers following the recent elections.
- The events sub-committee was strengthening its links with Grad Bar.
- Welcome week arrangements were in progress and it was noted that arrangements were further ahead than in 2013/14. The Principal requested an overview of proposed events for Welcome Week. ACTION: PGBoard.

The Principal emphasised the need for campus based events as well as off-campus events during Welcome Week. PGBoard members explained that the plan was to have two events running in parallel (one off campus and one on campus) on most nights.

During the course of discussion it was noted that one of the Cross Cultural Conversations entrants had mentioned that they thought you could only drink alcohol in a bar. It was noted that there was a need to help communicate that non-alcoholic drinks are available and there was a need to provide events which are not solely focussed on and around bars and drinking.

6. Student Experience Survey; the postgraduate view

Members of the Syndicate received the paper and the Principal reported on the survey which is administered by the Provost on a two-year cycle. It was noted that the survey was sent to undergraduates and postgraduates except for final year undergraduates who complete the National Student Survey. It was noted that:

- the feedback had been fairly positive.
- The data analysis showed that both mature and off campus students felt that the events were not aimed at them but were aimed at undergraduates. This student demographic was generally interested in events with a more academic focus (such as the PGR conference). It was noted that the college had recently organised (free to the student) coaching sessions and PhD writing sessions through Will Medd, these had been well received and attended.
- Improvements were needed in terms of the Graduate College newsletter. Work had been undertaken by the College Administrator however further work was needed. **ACTION JH**
- The College could usefully review its approach to student communications, linking in with the student communications audit undertaken by the Student Based Services Communications Manager. It was also noted that disseminating information through the academic departments worked well, particularly when it comes to events which support the academic endeavour. **ACTION JH & CP**
- In light of some of the feedback a new role was to be created in the college, a College Activities Co-Ordinator. This person would act as the conduit between the college and the PGBoard. The role holder's remit would be to engage with the student body to identify their needs in terms of college events and activities.
- Wellbeing Advisors in the colleges. The finer details of these roles is still being discussed, but there should be 3 or 4 people shared between between the colleges. Update to follow soon. **ACTION CP**

7. Senate

The Principal reported that Senate was starting to focus on postgraduates and their experience, which was a positive move. The Students' Union was also working to engage postgraduates and one of the Senate papers outlined how they Students' Union planned to enhance engagement with postgraduates as departmental representatives.

Discussion took place around the Senate papers and consideration was given to the changes to the College Constitutions which the college had been involved in revising.

During discussions, JG queried the process for assigning staff as senior members of a college. JG noted that as a casual member of staff he was not assigned to a college, when he received a substantive contract the process and roles/opportunities to become a senior member were not made clear. JG noted that because of his prior involvement with the colleges he was aware that he could request to be a member of a particular college, however for people who are new to the University this would not be clear.

It was noted that there must be some way of putting information across to new staff and increasing the desire to be a member of a college. SV suggested that targeting staff in postgraduate focussed roles could be a way to encourage new SCR members.

The Principal explained that she would survey SCR members who had not attended today's Syndicate to find out what would encourage them to engage more with the College. **ACTION: CP.**

8. Any Other Business

- Following on from the business planning process, new wellbeing advisors were to be recruited in the colleges. The advisors would be managed by SBS and Graduate College would likely get an advisor. The roles were currently being defined and further information would follow shortly. It was anticipated that the role holders would be in place for the start of the new academic year. **ACTION: CP.**
- YB-F reported that two initiatives, supported by the college, Stories at the Storey and the North West Literary Salon were going from strength to strength. The initiatives, developed and delivered by Yvonne and her colleague Naomi (both PhD students) had seen them engage postgraduates, undergraduates and members of the community. Their hard work had recently been recognised when they were awarded the Students' Union Community Initiative award.

The Principal closed the meeting and thanked everyone present for all their hard work in helping the college to achieve so much over the past year.

Jane Hlland
Syndicate Secretary

23 July 2015