

Date: Thursday, 31 January 2019

Item: Sabbatical Report

Union Senate



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The details in this report reflect progress made since the last meeting of Union Senate, which took place on Tuesday 20 November 2018 (#1 of 2018/19 AY).

Minutes of previous meetings can be found on our website here:

<https://www.susu.org/representation/minutes/committees/1284>

Leading the Union

Goal 1: Improving Union representation

The majority of work here has been focussed on two distinct strands – keeping our current representatives motivated and rewarded, and developing the current systems and structures we have to ensure that they are effective going forward.

Training continues for any newly co-opted Academic Representatives using the online SUSU Learning Management System, though take-up has been low across this year. We're welcoming the National Careers Service to the Union in the next couple of weeks as part of our commitment to continuous training for our Reps, and have a number of social events in the works for them in the coming weeks. We're continuing to work with both the Union and the University to introduce a reward offering for our Academic Reps, overlapping nicely with the work that Fleur is doing looking at our wider volunteer reward offer.

We currently have 319 Academic Representatives showing on the SUSU Representation system, with around 50 Reps currently awaiting co-option. A recent staffing change has meant that our systems are out-of-date in light of the new shape of the University, but I am pleased to confirm that work is now underway to bring us up-to-date in time for the NSS.

Progress: 3

	<p>I am also pleased to confirm that we now have comprehensive student representation across all key University meetings, with elected Academic Representatives attending and inputting to the organisation’s strategic direction going forward.</p>
<p>Goal 2: <i>Strengthening our Postgraduate representation</i></p>	<p>Our three PGR Reps continue to do fantastic work, and we have recently secured a seat on the University’s Doctoral College Board to ensure that they are influencing the direction of doctoral policy going forward. I am also continuing to work with Emily Harrison and the SUSU Student Communities team to deliver a comprehensive series of postgraduate events as part of SUSU’s business-as-usual activity. We’ve also just received an invite to attend the Doctoral College’s next induction event taking place within the next month or so, putting SUSU right at the front of the induction experience of all new PGR students.</p> <p>With the recent SUSU AGM opting to create the new VP Education & Democracy role with new responsibility for PG engagement I’ve been beginning to put some thought to the shape of PG engagement going forward. All thoughts are appreciated – my email address can be found at the front of this report.</p> <p>The above work also includes the expansion of academic representation to include a potential five new PGT Academic Reps. This is going to require a bit more work compared to their PGR counterparts as we do already have PGT Course Reps (and they are covered by the same Academic Rep structure as UG students) - a definite challenge for the SUSU Representation team!</p>
<p>Progress: 2</p>	
<p>Goal 3: <i>Encouraging a culture of consultation at the University of Southampton</i></p>	<p>The new Executive Director (Student Experience) has now arrived, following which the centrally organised Faculty Forums were put on the back burner pending a review and the recruitment of our new Vice-Chancellor. As such, there is no new progress to report here.</p> <p>However there has been progress with regards to the emerging new-look Education Strategy. I have been involved with the drafting process for a number of the projects sitting under this and have been pushing to ensure that the University engages with students as part of these. The good news off of the back of this is that the University has committed to putting students right at the heart of these projects as co-leaders and co-designers, including a number of paid opportunities as Excel Interns.</p>
<p>Progress: 2</p>	
<p>Additional Comments: I believe that there has been solid progress on all of the above areas, which is promising considering the close proximity of the NSS. We’ll ultimately have to wait until the results of the survey are available before we can make any further judgement, but I honestly think that this places us in good stead for coming years.</p>	

New Ideas	
<p>Goal 1: <i>Improving the availability and design of study spaces within the Students' Union</i></p>	<p>Some good news on this front as the SUSU Representation team have turned their efforts from the Café to the Concourse space (<i>see figure 1</i>). We've recently moved the charging lockers previously located in the Café (and purchased using money from the SUSU Education Zone) up to the Concourse and are working with the SUSU Marketing team to prepare a round of communications materials to help promote the service. My vision is to have a range of "quality-of-life resources" available in that space, building on the microwaves and charging lockers with other improvements based on student feedback. Keep your submissions and ideas coming in via You Make Change!</p> <p>It is also worth mentioning the other work going on across the institution involving study spaces. The Library microwaves, hot water points and drinking water points continue to be well-used (particularly during the exam season), and extended opening hours for Medicine students are looking incredibly likely. The Centenary Student Learning Centre is reaching completion, and I am awaiting a response regarding opening times and study space availability based on this.</p>
Progress: 2	
<p>Goal 2: <i>Expanding the University's digital resources to improve access to information</i></p>	<p>Work continues with the Open Data team on the UoS Maps service (maps.soton.ac.uk), with a new <i>Student Amenities</i> layer due to be added in the coming weeks. This will initially include the location of any microwaves and gender neutral toilets at the University, and will be expanded as more points of interest are identified.</p> <p>I'll speak more about consistency in the <i>Additional Comments</i> suggestion below, but I've recently become involved with a project at the University looking at Blackboard usage, and in particular the <i>Student Hub</i> currently in-place for FSS students (<i>see figure 2</i>). In essence, this <i>Hub</i> is a central resource for the students of the Faculty, giving them access to key FAQs, How-to guides and information on services such as the Union and Careers service. There is a drive to roll this service out to all students by the start of the 2019 academic year, and I will be supporting this going forward.</p> <p>iSolutions have confirmed that the appropriate channel for VDI/software suggestions is through ServiceLine, and are continuing to monitor this platform for viable new investments.</p>
Progress: 2	
<p>Goal 3: <i>Unpacking printing costs, and creating a system which is fair for all</i></p>	<p>The new printing service continues to go from strength-to-strength, with feedback being overwhelmingly positive thus far. I have been in conversation with a couple of other Students' Unions to discuss <i>free</i> printing services (e.g. Printt) to see what uptake and service has been like there.</p>
Progress: 3	
<p>Additional Comments: I am pleased to say that there has been progress on all of the above points following the last Senate meeting. These all represent tangible improvements to the student experience here at the University of Southampton. I am particularly proud of the improvements regarding the printing offer, although feedback remains welcome!</p>	

I mentioned in *Goal #2* that I wanted to talk about consistency. It has occurred to me recently that while all of the work that the University has been doing to give *more* to its students is fantastic, there are still far too many areas in which we aren't getting the basics right. There are cases where there are not enough seats in lecture theatres, not enough information available on module Blackboard sites and many more in between. I have therefore started work with the University's VP Education to begin a long-term project aiming to address these in a transparent and manageable way. After all, if there are basic things that we are not able to deliver on then we should be upfront as to why we are unable to do so. More to follow soon, but I can see this being a nice initiative to get underway over the coming months.



Figure 1 - The new location for the SUSU charging lockers

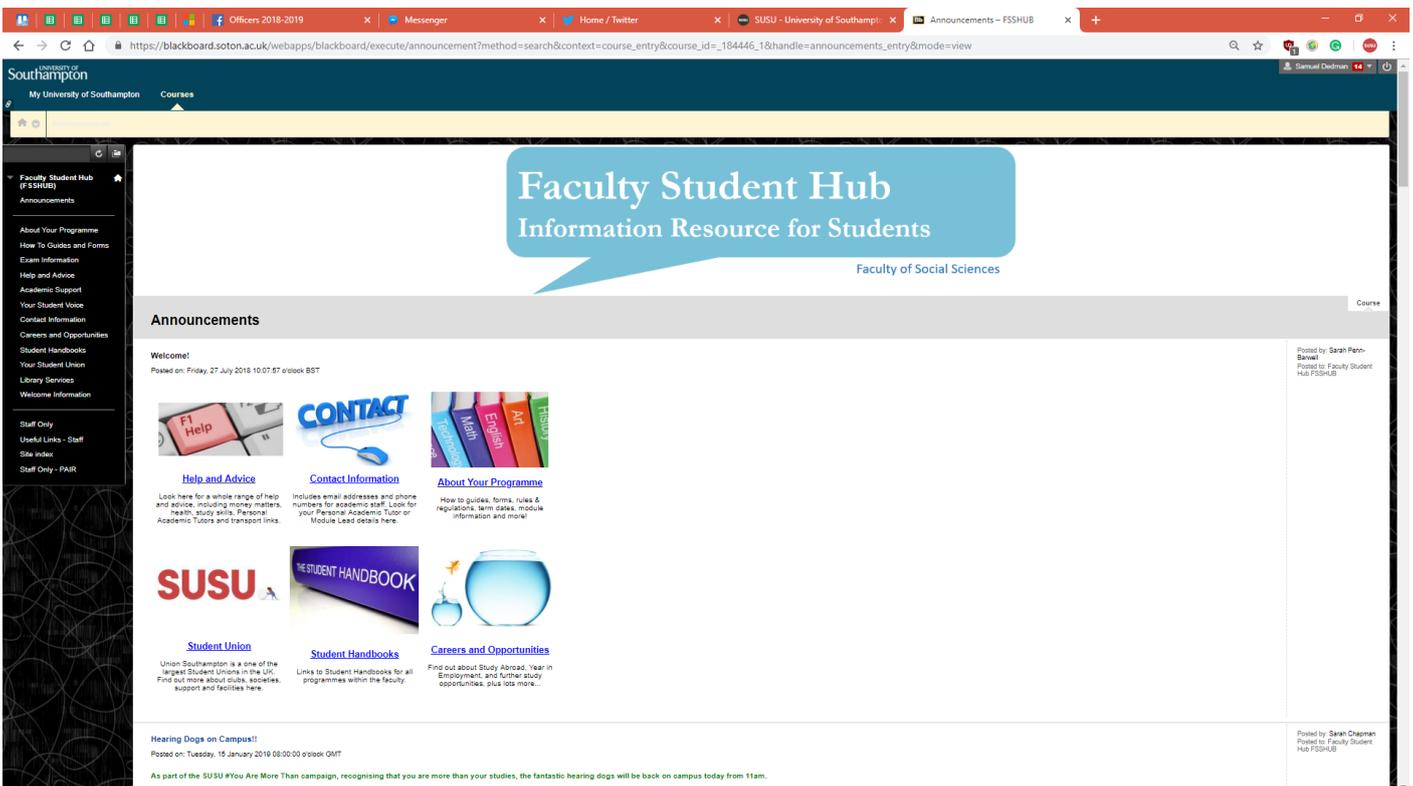


Figure 2 - The FSS Student Hub

Building on the Union's Work

Goal 1: *Create an Education Zone driven by student issues*

The Education Zone has met several times and is due to do so again over the coming weeks. The Zone continues to discuss the two goals agreed upon previously (Study Spaces and Feedback Systems), with individual Academic Representatives doing some fantastic work in line with this within their own Faculties. The Zone has also input to the University's Education Strategy (particularly efforts to review the Year 1 Semester 1 experience), and many of the individual reps have taken up (or will be taking up) positions on the boards overseeing these projects.

I'm disappointed to say that we haven't yet taken the Zone off of Highfield campus, however we have been able to experience first-hand the range of study spaces on offer.

Any *You Make Change* submissions relevant to the Zone have been easily dealt with outside of the Zone meetings. However I continue to seek opportunities to take suggestions to the Zone for consultation – I'm just waiting for the right one!

Progress: 2

Goal 2: *Celebrating our Academic reps*

The second Academic Rep Social event took place just before the recent vacation period, with upwards of 50 Academic Reps attending. Though there was a drop in attendance compared to the last meeting (down from 70) the verbal feedback was incredibly good. We are looking to organise another event just before the next vacation period, and have a networking evening for senior Academic Reps and key University staff booked for the next few weeks. We are also working with the External Engagement team to organise a joint social between Year 1 Course Reps and Block Reps in the near future.

As mentioned earlier we have the National Careers Service coming to the Union soon to deliver bespoke training to the SUSU Academic Representatives. We've also offered the sessions out to our colleagues at Southampton Solent SU, but have received no response as of yet.

Progress: 2

Goal 3: *Promoting the work of our Clubs & Societies*

Minor progress here as the second round of Union Grants has been released to the Clubs & Societies (see <https://www.susu.org/opportunities/grant-allocations.html>). For the first time in my memory the Education Zone granted all of the funds that it had available (£2,200), providing much-needed funds to a number of the Zone's clubs & societies. I also remain involved with the ongoing review into our processes around clubs & socs, which will ultimately have ramifications on those within the Zone.

Progress: 1

Additional Comments: Again, some good progress made in this section. Our Academic Reps and societies remain well motivated and continue to do fantastic work, and I hope that we are able to continue giving them the resources to do so.

The success of the first Academic Rep social is incredibly reassuring, and it is my hope that this trend continues as the year goes on. The success of the new training model very much depends on how well

it is attended, but as mentioned above signups look positive at present. Lots of work still to be done here as the year goes on!

Conclusion/AOB

It has been a busy couple of months at the Students' Union, and with Spring Elections and the opening of the NSS on the horizon it isn't about to get quieter any time soon. However I feel that I've been able to make good progress on all areas of my Sabb Plan, and I hope that Senate feels reassured of this fact.

One area of work which doesn't fit particularly neatly into any of the above is You Are More Than (or YAMT). YAMT has existed for several years as our attempt to relieve some of the stress of the exam/hand-in period and continues to go from strength to strength. This year we ran a number of events ranging from **Pet Rocks** (figure 3), **handing out soup** to the ever-popular **Hearings Dogs** (during which we raised £200+ for the charity, figure 4). We also hosted a range of chill-out and study spaces within the Union, and worked with the University in the promotion of all of the above (figure 5). Thank you to the entire YAMT team for their hard work in delivering this!

As ever, I would like to thank the SUSU Representation staff and the volunteers who make up the Education Zone for their support, input and guidance. They play a key role in the successful activity of the Education Zone, and I look forward to continue working with them over the time that I have remaining at SUSU.

I am more than happy to meet to discuss my plans, ideas and things that I could be incorporating into them. My details are at the top of this form, or please come and find me in the Sabb Office in person!



Figure 3 - The pet rocks made at WSA

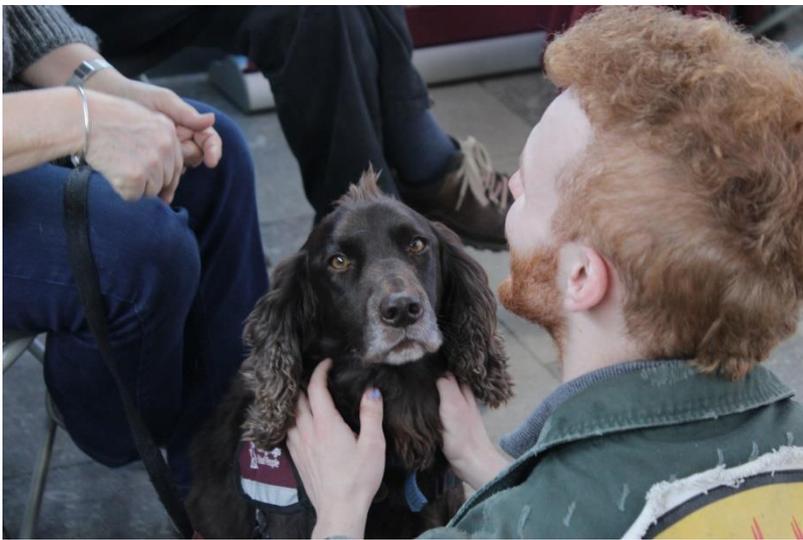


Figure 4 - A photo from last time the Hearing Dogs visited

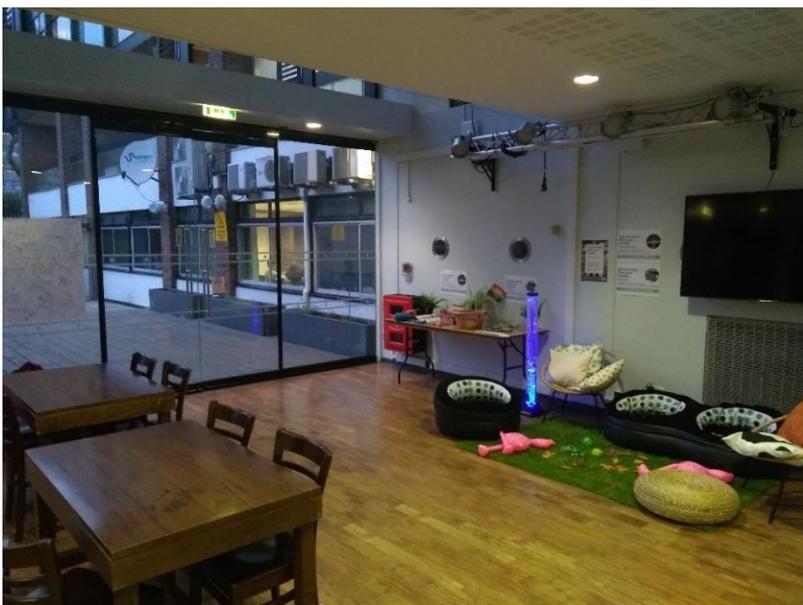


Figure 5 - The Bar 2 Chill-out Space

	What is the idea?	What do you hope to achieve?	Who will you be working with?	When do you expect to be finished (term)?
Leading the Union	Improving Union representation	A new representation structure which provides comprehensive representation to all students	SUSU Representation staff, SUSU SLT, University leadership, Wellington WG	June 2019 (with the new Course Rep structure to go live in Autumn 2018)
	Strengthening our Postgraduate representation	A dedicated Postgraduate representation structure tailored to their needs INCLUDING Course Rep coverage for PGRs and PGTs (or equivalent)	SUSU Representation staff, SUSU PG Committee, University Doctoral College	June 2019 (with the first PGR structure to go live in Autumn 2018)
	Encouraging a culture of consultation at the University of Southampton	The development of SUSU "Faculty Forums" into regular well-promoted events with University support	SUSU Representation staff, Academic Reps (esp. Faculty Officers) Education Strategy WG, Student Forum WG (?)	May 2019 (by which time two Forums should have taken place)
New ideas	Improving the availability and design of study spaces within the Students' Union	The redevelopment of the SUSU Café space as a properly-equipped study space.	SUSU SLT, SUSU Facilities, SUSU Representation staff	June 2019 (though maybe sooner if resource/funding allows)
	Expanding the University's digital resources to improve access to information	More software packages available on the VDI AND Improved MySouthampton experience AND Review into SUSSED integration	iSolutions, Library staff	December 2018 (dependent on iSolutions engagement)
	Unpacking printing costs, and creating a system which is fair for all	A lower cost of printing to students AND Possible reductions in binding costs AND Possible Union printing service	iSolutions, SUSU SLT	December 2018 (much sooner for core cost-of-printing strategy)
Building on the Union's work	Create an Education Zone driven by student issues	Six quorate Education Zone meetings across the year, across a range of Campuses and solving issues raised by students (e.g. YMC)	SUSU Representation staff	N/A (will be throughout the year instead)
	Celebrating our Academic reps	4 Academic Rep Celebration events, expanding on the scale and uptake of those this year AND A comprehensive Academic Rep training programme across a number of months AND A revised Course Rep Handbook	SUSU Representation staff (esp. CR Co-ordinator)	May 2019 (following 4 successful events)
	Promoting the work of our Clubs & Societies	Improved involvement of Zone Clubs & Socs in activities of the Zone AND A review into Club & Soc "value", especially for IM teams	SUSU Representation staff (esp. Ed Co-ordinator), Sabbatical Officers	N/A (will be throughout the year instead)