Student Council (26.11.20) – Summary of Meeting

Chaired by Victoria Udeh and Maryam Ateeq.
Agenda and Papers found here.

Updates from the Students’ Union:

- The main focus has been supporting students in their transition to online learning.
- The Advice & Support team has been operating online to aid in doing so.
- All Societies are completely free for students to join this year.
- The Elected Officers’ priority campaign has been Student Success Through COVID.
- All students are encouraged to apply for a paid position in the upcoming Elections.

Questions and Answers:

Q: Is anything being done to reduce tuition fees for this academic year?

- A (Saad Raees, VP Education): The university has made enormous efforts to provide effective teaching. They are trying to engage students through live synchronise sessions, pre-recorded lectures and pre-lockdown face to face teaching as well where possible which includes lab/practical sessions. However, we completely understand and agree that, when it’s safe to do so many of our students might prefer a more campus-based approach. I have stated in our previous SC as well that we have linked ourselves with a NUS campaign, in which they are lobbying the government to refund fees for the students where appropriate. If individual universities are to refund money directly, they’d run out of money very quickly, so we’re focusing our efforts on joining with NUS in calling for the government to put more financial support into universities.

(if you want to get involved in the campaign, please email campaigns@hertfordshire.su)

Q: Will the University be giving out souvenirs to students (e.g. Hoodies) like last year?

- A (Bobbie Jay, VP Activities): The University has to be cautious about how they give things out because of COVID, and the need for things to be quarantined, but they do still plan to do this – it’s just about being able to do it safely.

Q: Would it be possible to have an event celebrating international cultures, such as a potluck?

- A (Bobbie): We would love to be able to provide students with face to face events where we could try foods from different countries. Unfortunately, due to
government guidelines we are unable to hold these events on campus. We have to put the safety of our students and their families first.

**Q:** What should we do if we’ve come into contact with a COVID patient on placement, and how can we make up our placement hours if we have to shield?

- **A (Kayleigh, VP Community):** The best thing to do in situations like this is contact your programme lead, placement lead or practice educator, who will be able to advise on the range of support available.

**Q:** Will there be any employability events for students looking to get a job?

- **A (Saad):** The Careers team recently hosted a careers and employability event in collaboration with five other universities, and are planning to do more along these lines – it would be best to contact them directly for more specific enquiries.

**Q:** How often do you have to meet with your personal tutor?

- **A (Saad):** It’s really up to you and your personal tutor – you can decide what’s appropriate.

**Q:** What if students don’t have a laptop (or equivalent) for the purpose of online learning?

- **A (Saad):** The LRC has a laptop loaning scheme that students can make use of for this.

**Q:** Will Semester B have a blended learning approach in the same way as Semester A?

- **A (Saad):** It will depend on how things go with lockdown(s), but the University’s priority is for level 4 and 7 students to get more face-to-face teaching where possible.

**Q:** What other ways are you trying to engage with and get information out of students?

- **A (Dani Bradford, Research Coordinator):** In addition to surveys, this year we’ll also be hosting some focus groups on wellbeing and academic support. We then have #HertsEmpowerment on our website, where students are able to leave feedback,
and in terms of engaging the less engaged students, we’ve done some analysis on the demographic(s) of students that aren’t doing so at the level we’d expect/want, so will be able to do targeted marketing for these groups moving forward.

**Q:** A lot of students are becoming overwhelmed with all the information they receive (via email etc.) – is there a plan to make these communications easier for students to engage with?

- **A (Kayleigh):** The wellbeing toolkit we’re putting together will cover things like this, so that there are various strategies and support mechanisms all in one space for students to access and make use of.

**Q:** A lot of students are struggling with the amount of deadlines they have to complete in a short space of time – is there anything the SU can do to help support with this?

- **A (Saad):** In cases like this it’s good to contact the module leader(s) and ask for extensions, but it would be useful for us to collect more feedback and see what the wider student view on this is, so that we can lobby for it in the various committees we’re a part of.

**Q:** What support is available to (International) students who are struggling with the system of teaching in the UK?

- **A (Kayleigh):** If you’re struggling with your studies at any point you can make use of our free and impartial [Advice & Support team](#).

**Q:** Is there anything that can be done about agents/landlords asking for 6 months rent from those without a guarantor?

- **A (Karthik Kumar Bonkur, President):** I’m working with the Vice-Chancellor on this and have sent a letter to the local MP to raise it as an issue. We’re also trying to link up with some guarantor companies who can provide support on this for International students.

**Q:** Who is the best person to contact for an academic reference?

- **A (Saad):** Your programme or module leader(s) are the key people for this, and your personal tutor.
Q: How are the SU assisting students wanting a job?

- **A (Kayleigh):** We normally do have part-time student-staff, but this hasn’t been possible this year due to the financial impact of COVID. Information about other part-time jobs, however, can be found [here](#).

Q: Is there a way for International students to open a bank account without proof of address?

- **A (Kayleigh):** All the information regarding International students’ bank accounts can be found [here](#).

Q: Does the Students’ Union have provision for concessionary transport fares for students?

- **A (Kayleigh):** Information around local transport and discounts for students can be found [here](#).

Elected Officer / Students’ Union Contact Details:

President: Karthik Kumar Bonkur
  e: president@hertfordshire.su

VP Activities: Bobbie Jay
  e: vp.activities@hertfordshire.su

VP Community: Kayleigh Malone
  e: vp.community@hertfordshire.su

VP Education: Saad Raees
  e: vp.education@hertfordshire.su

Supporting students through COVID-19: [https://hertfordshire.su/](https://hertfordshire.su/)