

Voting Members

Joe Hill (Education Officer, Chair)
Tianjie Liu [Alice], (International Officer)
Ben Lockley (Postgraduate Officer)
Muskaan Singh (Commuter Students' Representative)
Jacob Dyke (Student Member, Open Place)
Elizabeth Mullenger (Student Member, Open Place)
Rio Drinkwater (Student Member, Open Place)
Ffion Williams (Student Member, Open Place)

In Attendance:

Amelia McLoughlan (Representation Coordinator)
Louie/Sophie Mai Salmon (Representation Coordinator)
Christian Black (Senior Reps Coordinator)
James Lindsey (Director of Community & Representation)

Apologies:

None.

Trigger Warnings:

Item No.	Item Title	Meeting Notes	Actions
Start			

<p>1</p>	<p>Welcome & Introductions</p>	<p>JH introduced the meeting: Thank you for coming to this first Education Committee of the year. This is the Guild forum to talk about educational matters, the Student Rep System and a chance to input on what is going on around the University. This year, our academic committees have been aligned with our new democratic system following an ongoing review. This means decision making powers about held mostly within our democratic processes, with the Education Committees being more of an informal space to discuss topics and to organise around certain issues.</p> <p>JH led the introductions of the members.</p>	
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<p>2</p>	<p>Officers Updates</p>	<p>JH explained the officer role: A lot of what we do is attending committees and meetings with the University, talking to university staff and raising awareness of issues going on around campus. We have all campaigned on different issues and will be raising them at different levels.</p> <p>JH gave an update detailing that they and BL have been attending quality assurance committees which deals with late returns of feedback and the University's reporting on it. We have been trying to get more accurate reporting on when students have been given work back late, because we need to improve how the University does that by knowing where that's going wrong across and where bad feedback is being given.</p> <p>AL explained that International Officer represents all the international students. Alongside this I am delivering my manifesto</p>	
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		<p>plans which are information, inclusivity, and cross-cultural activities. I've also been in some University Committee meetings and raised a few points about international students' learning and academic issues. For example, AI Tests for generated AI tend to see a AI written submission, if your first language is not English. However, it is still the international student's words. I've also been doing some activities and events including the International Student and language cafes, where everyone is invited. I've also started the "talk to Alice" project to sit around campus to hear students opinions and if they need anything. I've also been in close contact with international students team in the University, about clearer visa information and relative questions support. I've also been talking to the University Estate Office about having a safe crossing point outside Prior Field (Birmingham International Academy).</p>	
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		<p>BL updated that over the past semester, I have continued my work from last year in supporting postgraduate students with the developing the community aspect of their degrees in the PTES and PRESS. That's the surveys of postgraduate students and postgraduate researchers, community and a sense of belonging are the two things that continue to come up as being the areas where students University rank their experience as being the lowest or the most negative. So to that end I have been working with the University Graduate School, and through regular catch ups and joint events, and also through the support of our Guild team here as well to put on social events for postgraduate students. I've also been pushing at the school and college level for departments to invest money in ensuring that there is enough space for PGTA – that's postgraduate research teaching</p>	
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		<p>students, and PGRs and PGTs more widely, to have the space to socialise and for that to be encouraged within their cohorts. On the more education side of things, I've been working closely with JH on a number of one to ones, we've been delivering on things like ensuring that the mid module review questions are reflective of the needs of Birmingham students and ensuring that those questions are monitored and that academics do make changes while students are at university. We want to stop the cycle of students giving feedback and there's no change made until after they've left University. to make change. Right here right now while you're still here. We have secured earlier release of student timetables, through work we did last year with JH's predecessor and timetables for next semester will be released by the 13th of December which is great progress from previous years. The main issue affecting student education this year, is changes to</p>	
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		<p>the academic calendar and Education Committee will probably play a role as JH mentioned, in making sure that we get feedback from reps that on the new assessment structures that have come in for cohorts this year with the new academic calendar to make sure that's been implemented fairly, and to make sure those adjustments have been made in line with the new assessment periods.</p> <p>JH noted that there was an agenda point to discuss this later in the meeting.</p> <p>AL added that we can't forget that international students are expected by the home office and university to stay in the UK, in Birmingham, in during term time. So although at the end of the academic year, there are three weeks when students perhaps won't be won't have any lectures or like exams, international student are still expected to be here and cite their attendance. So I've been</p>	
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		working with the University on communicating that information really clearly.	
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3	<p>Rep Team Update</p>	<p>CB introduced the staff team, and explained that there's significant work on the development of the Rep System, the staff team is focusing on how we develop this system across the university, how that system actually functions operationally, and how we basically equip students to be the best reps that they can be – contributing to that really positive change that the officers have spoken about.</p> <p>Updates with increase in detail throughout the year, but for our first meeting I will focus on what we've been doing recently. Over the summer we agreed that our student rep system needed some additional support to center it back to the forefront of what we do as an organisation, resulting in the Rep Improvement Plan. Under this plan, we have five key focus areas to improve the experience for student reps; How we recruit them, how we train them, how we support student reps, and then how we recognise them. There is also a strand around</p>	
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		<p>our partnership with the University, which I won't go into here. On a recruitment point of view, in a really positive first step. Is that actually we've just finished recruitment for student reps for this term, and we have we've recruited 1300 reps across the university. We are also in the process of concluding our elected reps process. We are also doing work on how students can access who their reps are. In terms of how we train reps, we have overhauled of our student rep training and that has allowed us to make some improvements, including some new activities and quizzes. The training is conducted online so students on differing timetables can access it. We also have returning rep training session, which is a shorter session that covers a refresher and the summer changes. Another big emphasis for the team, this year is about developing more training opportunities for student reps outside of just their core training;</p>	
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		<p>offering opportunities like co chair training. We're also looking at a range of sessions around extracurricular activity, and other things that student reps can get involved in to develop their skills and be able to showcase the skills they learn as a student rep.</p> <p>In terms of supporting student reps, the main things that we launched our student rep newsletter that has lots of key information around what's going on in the university around the student rep system, with some staff highlights so you get to hear about some of the staff who worked with us on the system, who sometimes go a little bit under the radar. We've also done a lot of work with academic engagement fund which we'll talk about in another item. But that is another big area of support that we've been working on. And then finally, I know it was in here so I mentioned mentioning it but we are in the next few days. early next week. We'll be launching rep of the month for this year, and looking for</p>	
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		<p>applications for our first rep of the month for November. We have just started the very early planning for Rep Award prep which will be taking place at some point towards the end of term two. I also wanted to do is a little bit of promotion - we are planning a couple of student rep socials coming up in the next month; one that will be specifically for our postgraduate reps, and then there'll be one that will be open for all student reps which will be around the last week of teaching/early December.</p>	
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4	<p style="text-align: center;">Academic Engagement Fund Delegation</p>	<p>CB explained that over the summer we took a look at the formerly known Rep Fund, now called academic engagement, and reviewed feedback we got from the previous Education Officer and Guild Education Committee. The main feedback we got around the academic engagement was that it took too long to process it, took too long for students to get hold of the information, and get reimbursed. The time taken to get through the decision making process meant that events had either passed or students lost interest in running events. So we did a review of the Fund over the summer, the process, the process documents and case studies of how an individual application has moved all the way through from coming to the reps team, then go into the education officer go into education committee to approval. The document we are presenting to the committee outlines streamlining that process. The main change is the name, aimed to reflect</p>	
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		<p>that we want the fund to be more focused around student reps engaging their cohorts in academic discussion, academic feedback, and thinking about how we represent students and how reps represent students in an academic sense. Previously, it had been a little bit too generic. The second major change is it just simplifies the process, proposing that students will be able to submit applications on the website. They will be able to choose from almost a pre agreed list (created with the education officer) of different things they would like to do with that funding or different sets of funding they would like to request. It would then be reviewed by the reps team who would have the power to approve that request, dispensing funding as it fits within that criteria. If it was outside of that criteria, we would go back to the Education Officer or to the Guild Education Committee who have oversight of the academic engagement fund for a decision. I</p>	
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		<p>would update the Education Officer every two weeks with the requests, both approved and a larger paper coming back to Guild Education Committee with the outcome of all requests.</p> <p>JH added that from an Officer's perspective it's about getting the money to reps as quickly as possible so that as much activity can go on as possible. We want to be out and about harvesting as much student opinion as we can.</p> <p>EM asked to clarify if reps would spend the money and then try and claim it back, or whether they would say what they're going to spend it on and then be given the money. I want to ensure this made really clear to students, so they don't spend out of their own pocket, with an assumption of approval and then end up in a situation where the request didn't meet the criteria and they're out of pocket.</p>	
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		<p>JH agreed that the point is really important - In the communications to students, the process and how works need to be really clear once it goes live.</p> <p>CB expanded that is absolutely a very valid comment around the process. Within the agreed listing criteria on the website, ideally, some of those options would be that resources can be paid directly for the student. For example, for the sake of the committee, we could say that they want to host an event in Joe's Bar in The Guild. As a team, we approve with note of the number of attendees, and we will organise that as a transfer internally, so the student rep just has to give the name of Joe's Bar. There are other areas for example, if they were going into an external event, or an external venue where a monetary spend would be required, we would work with the students throughout the application process and make those aspects really clear.</p>	
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		<p>JL added that there are situations where we could pay on behalf of students but that would require as much notice as possible. The application would need to be approved first, and then the funds spent through the guild, as long as reps are giving us enough notice then we can work hard to make sure that they're not out of pocket. However, that's very much notice driven.</p> <p>JH concluded that it's a really important point, to making sure that it's all the information is all out there before people are going trying to organise things and potentially spending money because we want it to be a positive experience of volunteers.</p> <p>JH invited final comments or question on the attached document.</p> <p>AM administered the vote via on online form with live results. All eight</p>	<p>Vote Passes, proposal to be</p>
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		eligible votes were cast. 6 votes in favour of the proposal, and 2 votes against.	implemented by the Reps Team.
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5	<p>Member Feedback</p>	<p>EM raised an issue experienced when standing for school rep, and has concerns about this happening to other students. Twice, I got quite aggressive emails telling me that I hadn't spent my expenses and that I was going to be suspended. The role I was standing for didn't have expenses. The tone of the email was really not very nice. I did explain who I was and that perhaps this had been a mistake, but I didn't hear anything at all - apart from having a second email still telling me I haven't spent any money. The experienced made me consider withdrawing because it felt like not a very nice situation. I just wanted to make you aware that that happened.</p> <p>JH found that to be valuable feedback. It should be a positive and exciting thing to stand for elections. It shouldn't be something that people feel is stressful. I don't know if there's a candidate feedback form or feedback sessions that have</p>	
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		<p>been going on. But we will certainly pass that on to the democracy team. We seem to have others with similar experiences.</p> <p>JL apologises for the tone not coming across in the right way. I'm happy to take that away and look to if you want to forward the email on to me and any thoughts. Just to give a bit of context, because it's a cross campus election and because of the Senate rep, we are held to quite a high threshold for ensuring the elections are free and fair. Unfortunately, sometimes that can be quite strict enforcement of the rules to make sure that they are there. We're trying to do it in the most sort of supportive way possible. With this election, there are a lot of roles, different positions and candidates but apologies that it came across that way. There is a reason why we are strict on that because of the statutory duty but I'm more than happy to hear the</p>	<p>JL to action</p>
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		concerns, take them away and feedback any changes.	

<p>6</p>	<p>Summer Timetable Changes</p>	<p>JH introduced that there change the academic calendar this year. It means the two big changes are a shorter winter exam period, from two weeks to a week, an extra third term created at the end of the year to deal with the exam period, and a three week enrichment period with various activities - academic and not - going on. We have talked quite a lot to the university about this, but we're not sure that students know about it. We want to gather opinion as to how aware people are, what opinions you might have on the changes, how much you've heard from your colleges and your academics about how it's how it's going to work. It is a significant change to the year if you're a continuing student.</p> <p>JH invited comments.</p> <p>BL asked who [student members] was aware there was a change?</p>	
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		<p>Committee members responded in the negative.</p> <p>AL commented that the International Student check in hasn't change because the term time remains the same. It doesn't really have negative or positive impact because it doesn't change the term time. From my understanding it has a little influence on the master's programme because the assessment period changed, but coming into that programme, you wouldn't be aware of that.</p> <p>JH added that it depends on how the assessment on your course is structured. There's many courses around the university where if you had a significant piece of assessment or exams in January, then some or all of that will have been moved to summer. The idea is to do less assessment overall, because the university over assess their students compared to other universities. But it does mean that</p>	
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		<p>some continuing students will be seeing more summer assessment, then they're used to. It an interesting change for masters' students and we've raised the fact that masters students remain over the summer anyway. Hopefully, the enrichment period after exams will mean that there'll be a little bit more on campus for you and a little bit more life over summer but that relies on implementation.</p> <p>AM noted the potential impact on part time masters' students, as part time timetables tend to operate under a different framework. Experience of this from members of the committee would be useful to raise.</p> <p>JH concluded that message is please just tell us whether you think, and more we know the more we can tell feedback to the university and ensure your interests.</p> <p>AL agreed.</p>	
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		<p>JH added that I hope people signed up to be course reps as well.</p> <p>JD raised concerned about the Wi-Fi provision on campus, as there are some places where on the Wi-Fi signal is really poor, meaning students are having to use Guest Wi-Fi.</p> <p>JH agreed that's if was a good point to make about Wi-Fi, eduroam and guest Wi Fi are both notoriously quite unreliable. I would have to think about where specifically we would bring that up. It's something that academics and the staff complain about too, and so I'm sure there is appetite for change. Library staff can help with some of the permissions and technical support.</p> <p>FW raised a question on when College Rep election results will be released.</p>	
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		<p>JH explained that there have been a few issues with elections, in connection with the data received from the University and this has incurred delays.</p> <p>AM confirmed that the results are coming out imminently. We have done the lots for some of the tie break election yesterday and so we do have internal results. We're just waiting for them to be verified for publication. Colleges will also be notified as soon as the official results are published on the website.</p> <p>AL referred back to the previous concern about Wi-Fi. Students can login Eduroam. You just need to type in your student email and password. It should automatically log you in every time when you are on campus. Many students may have that confusion, especially International students.</p>	
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		<p>JH added as I said, there's library tech help that can assist students with that and see those problems a lot. Is there anything else that people would like to raise for discussion? As I say, I'm aware that this is the first one so people might not be knowing how it's run. We really do want this to be a kind of forum to for you guys got updates about what's going on at the guild.</p> <p>EM asked we don't have posters up in the communal areas explaining how to connect to the Wi-Fi?</p> <p>JH agreed that it's a really good point about the posters. It would make a lot of sense.</p> <p>JH noted that we want Guild Education Committee to be a space where we can give you an update on what we've been working on, and members can feedback what they are seeing on campus and then hopefully we can find way forward.</p>	
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7	AOB	<p>AL commented that they wanted the chance for the committee to meet in person, potentially with snacks.</p> <p>JH agreed that they will look into what works for everyone and look into having the next meeting in person.</p> <p>AL agreed.</p> <p>JH noted to investigate snacks, a hybrid option and the scheduling of the next meeting.</p>	
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Date & Time of next meeting: