

Meeting of online student representatives, 30 October 2018

Present: Adam Gac (Opera Studies, L4), Ian Chowcat (Opera Studies, L4), Tim Lloyd (Opera Studies, L6) Olly Hope (Theatre Studies, L4), Kate Aiken, (Theatre Studies L4/L5), Mike Leeds (Theatre Studies, L6), Andrew Walker (Vice Principal)

Following introductions, AW explained that one of the principal purposes of this first meeting of the academic year with the online student reps was to discuss the role of the student rep, share good and effective practice, and to brief students about the likely agenda of the forthcoming programme committees.

It was noted that two of the student reps present were new to the role. It was agreed that later in the meeting experienced student reps would share their practice with the new reps with regard particularly to obtaining views from fellow students.

Student reps were informed that the forthcoming programme committees on the Opera Studies and Theatre Studies degrees would include consideration of the annual monitoring reports relating to the operation of the programmes last academic year. These will include responses from student surveys, input from the external examiner, as well as presenting a range of data relating to the programme – e.g. pertaining to student achievement; and the demographic profile of the programmes' student cohorts. Each programme's external examiner's report would also be considered at the programme committee. Several students noted that they had already received some documentation in advance of next week's programme committee meetings.

Some brief discussion took place regarding the restructure which affected both programmes, with Jayne Richards taking on the role of Online Curriculum Manager and Lead Academic Tutors being appointed for each programme – Dr Michelle Assay for Opera Studies and Dr Karen Morash for Theatre Studies. Student reps indicated that they would be better placed to discuss the operation of this new structure once it had been in place rather longer.

Student reps indicated that there were a number of content-specific issues that they acknowledged would be more appropriately raised at programme committee level. However, there were a number of more general issues arising from student experiences to date.

On Opera Studies, there were some concerns expressed relating to the need to ensure that the learning resources were being kept up to date. This was an ongoing task which students indicated that the College needed to prioritise. AW would raise these matters with the Online Curriculum Development Manager and Senior Management Committee. **Action: AW**

Students on both programmes felt that further investment was needed in the platform on which the College's online provision was delivered. One of the Theatre

Studies student reps expressed concerns aired by several fellow students regarding the future of the College's online provision. AW assured students that the College was committed to online delivery.

On Theatre Studies there were a number of issues raised about the disparity of workloads between similarly-sized modules. Whilst students were enjoying the new, more interactive modules, there was a sense that the work load associated with these had increased quite significantly compared to other less interactive modules of the same credit size. It was felt that more specific information regarding assessment expectations would be helpful. Students valued the flexibility that online learning allowed them. It was not felt that having to meet regular, often weekly, deadlines facilitated this flexible learning. AW would raise these matters with the Online Curriculum Development Manager. **Action: AW.**

Discussion took place about effective ways in which students representatives could connect with their fellow students. TL indicated that he had contacted other Opera Studies students using students' College email addresses, supplied by Karen Ewer. It was recommended that Theatre Studies student reps should contact Ali Sheehan to establish whether such email addresses could be provided to them in a similar way. It was acknowledged that not all online students wished to engage with the wider online learning community and that student reps should not, therefore, be discouraged if there was little contact between them and the majority of their fellow students. Other possible communication possibilities were discussed – including the setting up of a drop-in mailing system and the institution of a more interactive forum. AW would raise these matters with the Online Curriculum Development Manager. **Action: AW.**

Some discussion also took place regarding the production of a more bespoke student representative handbook for online students. AW agreed to circulate the existing handbook for online student reps' comments. It was agreed that such comments should be given to AW by the end of January. This would then enable time for the handbook to be amended prior to the start of the 2019-20 academic year. **Action: AW and student reps.**

AW also agreed to circulate the College's learning, teaching and student support strategy to online student reps. **Action: AW.**