

Minutes:**Academic Zone**

Meeting 02 of the academic year 2021-22

Date / Time:

8th February 2022, 17:15-18:00

Location:

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Chair:

Nyashadashe Nguwo

Academic Executive Officer

Attendees:

Nyashadashe Nguwo (NN)

Academic Executive Officer

Myra Kiama (MK)

Academic Representation Coordinator

Sofia Costa Marques (SM)

Academic Zone Member

Toby Smith (TS)

Academic Zone Member

Aliya Amin Khan (AK)

Academic Zone Member

Stephanie Glazebrook (SG)

Academic Zone Member

Belle Willis (BW)

Academic Zone Member

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**NN**

Hello everyone, thank you for coming along today to Academic Zone, this is our second meeting of the academic year. I'm Nyasha and I'm sure you guys already know me I'm the Academic Executive Officer and I've been in office for three months and looking forward to sharing with you all everything I have been up to with the university, and all the meetings and committees I have been invited to attend. Could everyone here introduce themselves too.

2. Education 2030**NN**

Education 2030, for those that don't know is the new way of teaching the university is looking to implement. A lot of competitor universities already use this method and involves block teaching. Each teaching block is 10 weeks long, and you are taught one subject and then you are assessed on that subject area after that block of teaching is complete. That's the update of education 2030, and it will be implemented in the next academic year.

AK

Is there still a conversation about everything being hybrid?

NN

The environment is looking like there won't be anymore pandemic, so they're looking to focus more on face to face teaching and interactions, it will remain hybrid until they make an announcement that they have stopped doing that. But right now, it's not going to be a quick shift the current way of learning is still going to continue.

SM

Is this going to apply for all types of courses? Graduate, postgraduate, MBA

NN

Education 2030? The block learning approach, it's not going to affect current students now because you have already started. It's going to start from September 2023?

- SM** But, if you were going to start a masters for instance, does it already apply for masters as well?
- NN** I'm sure it does apply for masters, and masters students kind of learn that way but if you will be doing a masters from September onwards. The only difference I think is that assessments will be quicker, as soon as you finish that block then the assessment will follow.

3. Academic Representation at University meetings

- NN** I'm going to be giving updates on the university meetings I've been into. Since, I've been elected into the position I've been inducted into Academic Board (AB), AB is one of the high-level boards in the university that make major decisions in how the university functions and how decisions in terms of teaching and how student experience is enhanced, I'm there to represent the student voice. I've had my first meeting last year and the next one is in a few weeks so I was just catching up with what's been happening before and getting up to speed with it. The last time it was mainly about education 2030 and how the university is going to be changing the software we will be using.
- NN** Since I've been doing validations which are connected to education 2030, there won't be module handbooks but they're looking to improve the handbooks because you cannot edit them. I've been invited to model a new way of viewing a handbook, if anyone has any ideas, I'll be taking ideas as a new committee meeting will be taking place in a few weeks, they want to make the handbooks more flexible. I met with a department at the university called organisational development. These work separately to the university but their main aim is to instil change within the university so they have been going around hosing workshops and asking students about their life, and how lectures are going and they have not met with the Students' Union so I bridge that gap. They are also open to meeting with students.
- NN** I'm also in the distance learning committee, there are some students when they enrol they cannot come to the university as quickly as they should. If they're international students sometimes there are visa issues, or things like that. The distance learning committee make sure they accommodate all issues, and maybe those who fall ill during the term and can't come to campus too. The more feedback I get from students in this aspect the more they know how to support students.
- NN** I've been involved in a disciplinary committee, we look into what's going on and if students will face any penalties for their behaviour. Those are the updates that I can give for now. I can take questions, or we can discuss anything that you find worth looking into.
- TS** I did say during the Academic Board meeting that you did a good job, I'm looking forward to the next one hopefully it's as good as the last one

4. VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) update

NN If there's no other questions this will lead me to another big project that the university is doing, the virtual learning environment some did not know we are changing from blackboard. Blackboard's license is expiring, because they had a ten-year license and we have about 4 companies that are going to pitch their software. We went through a tendering process and they're going to do a desktop display of the different software, blackboard also wants to offer an updated solution. This will be in March, they're going to take the university staff through how the software will work and everything. There's blackboard and another one called Brightspace, Canva and then there's Moodle. The one that's gets the contract is what the university will start using from probably end of 2023. Blackboard is extended up to the end of 2022. So, the academic year of 2023 that's when we will be moving onto the new software that will be chosen. Any questions, clarifications on that?

5. Feedback from zone members/Zone fund discussion

NN Just opening the floor guys, what do you expect from being part of Academic Zone? What do you expect to achieve or be part of? Just getting your views.

SM I've just come to the conclusion about how long change take, for instance you were talking about block teaching. The problems that are happening right now, they're going to change, they're not going to be the same.

TS Change takes a long time, I've got an interview tomorrow about a job about block learning they're trying to get the student perspective but they want to do their due diligence that's why it's taking so long.

SM I think something positive about it, is that you're not going to have a bunch of random assignments of different topics at the same time so you're going to be able to focus more, hopefully.

AK It's a good idea to find the issue and create a solution while it's happening because then once the module is finished there's no point then implementing change.

SM I can see an issue with this type of module, because the assessments were separated and you had time to take the first one and retake it if you failed before taking the second one. This might be an issue with block learning.

NN Staff are adjusting to the new way of teaching and still balancing the current way of teaching, it will be necessary to have feedback along the way.

SM Are they going to make sure that we can have that type of feedback in the earlier modules?

NN Yes, that is what I proposed. The university has the capacity to capture feedback after seminars and lecturers and ask how they are feeling, without using a survey in can be done informally. For example, what we did during international welcome week, we had some social events and had an informal chat and asked them questions, how they're feeling and settling in and you can get to know how they're feeling.

- AK** I think it would be a good idea to have a survey given out to students in the middle of a module because that's when most of the issues are starting, by the end of the module that's when you get all the complaints from students. But you can't really do anything about it at the end. It's more like toward the end you need to change the module according to students needs, so the feedback should also take place in the middle of the module.
- NN** True, I'm sure we need to take that into consideration Myra will just take that down. This came from Course Reps in CEM there was an issue about students asking about the safety net policy. If it's going to be brought back or not, it's something I'll ask about in Academic Board. It was brought in for COVID, but no longer applies as things are going back to normality.
- NN** I do have a project I would like to launch as an exec. I know a lot of people don't know what the student union does. They think you go in there to find something to eat and on a Wednesday night you go clubbing but there's more to a student union we are there to help students with housing, opportunities, advice, wellbeing. You know if you mess up an assignment and the plagiarism score is 80%, you can come to the students' union for support. I want to do an awareness campaign on campus and going to each faculty building and have a stand with student union staff where they talk about what they do. We're in the process of creating a short video with every team in the union where they explain what they do.
- MK** Sorry to interrupt you, we have 10 more minutes before we start Student Council but there was one more point on the agenda I'm not sure you have covered yet. So, the final agenda point was, feedback from zone members and the zone fund discussion. I'm not sure many students are aware of the fact that each zone, including Academic Zone has a budget to run campaigns etc.
- NN** Thank you. We do have a budget, we do have money. Can you confirm for me is the budget £250?
- MK** I'm not too sure, I'll check that for you.
- TS** Would it be a good idea on the student union website explaining what the student union does, what zones and council do it might help having it plain and simple to explain it.
- SM** I agree with you Toby, however I have a lot of colleagues who do not know what the student union and are in their final year of studying but have never even clicked to see their website. I think we need have a campaign that is actually reaching people, in the buildings or actually going to some lecture theatres. I remember in my first year we would always have conversations about placements and someone would come in to talk about them, and I think we could have something like that but for the student union. Explaining what type of support is available, because I'm really sure most people are not aware, they think it's just Freshers and nights out.
- NN** I'll definitely be updating you on that, and I would love for everyone of you to be involved and to have many more students know what we do.
- TS** Is there a day or a meeting to discuss this? Or will it just be during zone and council

meetings?

- NN** No, we can agree to meet whenever it's necessary to discuss plans, that's also why I created the zone teams chat so that we can agree whenever to meet. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss before we go to council as we are running short of time? It was lovely to have this discussion and to know that we have the capacity to run any campaigns we want to, and we definitely have support and resources from the student union. If you have any ideas feel free to drop it in informally in the teams chat.
- TS** It was lovely talking to you Nyasha.
- SM** It was really nice and informative.
- NN** Hopefully, we will continue meeting and putting plans together and thank you Myra in the background supporting.
- TS** Thank you, Myra.
- MK** It was great to be here and listen to your ideas and take note of them, but that is all of our time. We will be moved to the main room in a little while and Student Council will start.
- NN** Closed the meeting.