



## STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### Minutes of Meeting on Monday 23 November 2015

<b>Present:</b>	John Turner( <i>Chair</i> )	Chair of Governors
	Mr A Abdi	Student Representative
	Mr K Amlani	Student Representative
	Ms A Arhipova	Student Representative
	Ms C Cook	Student Representative
	Ms S Gannon	Staff Governor
	Mr L Middleton	Student Representative
	Ms G Mistry	Student Governor
	Ms S Overton-Edwards	Principal
	Mr A Pabari	Student Representative
	Ms E Pabari	Student Representative
	Ms M Petrie	Student Representative
	Ms R Shah	Student Representative
	Ms N Patel	Student Representative
	Mr H Solanki	Parent Governor
	Mr N Unadkat	Student Governor
	Ms E Ward	Student Executive Team Lead
<b>In attendance:</b>	Mr R Mansfield	Clerk

Ref.		Action
L/15/06	<p><b>Item 1 – Apologies for Absence:</b></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Mitul Dattani, student representative. The meeting was declared quorate. John Turner welcomed student representatives to the meeting. He regarded the Student Affairs Committee as of the greatest importance as students were the customers of the College. At his suggestion those present briefly introduced themselves.</p>	
L/15/07	<p><b>Item 2 – Declaration of Interests in Agenda Items:</b></p> <p>John Turner explained the nature and the significance of declarations of interest. Suzanne Overton-Edwards declared an interest in a matter arising from the next agenda item, in that she was a member of the Board of De Montfort University (DMU); she did not believe however that this constituted a conflict of interests.</p>	
L/15/08	<p><b>Item 3 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising:</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting on 27 April 2015 were accepted as an accurate record and were duly signed by John Turner. The actions listed in the minutes were then reviewed. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that Midshires had advised her</p>	

that a canteen complaints book was kept at the College Reception. This was felt to be better practice than keeping the book in the canteen, as it enabled students to complete their entries at leisure. Nishil Unadkat asked that a notice should be displayed in the canteen to make clear where the complaints book was kept. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would speak to Midshires about this.

Suzanne Overton-Edwards reported that she had spoken with Patsy Hamer about quiet study space when the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) was full. Patsy Hamer would, at her discretion, direct students who approached her to a quiet study room and would provide access to a laptop if required. There had apparently been little demand for additional study space since the early part of term.

Suzanne Overton-Edwards clarified the situation regarding College students who wished to use DMU facilities. College students were entitled to use DMU facilities provided that they had a reference from the College. Students under 18 would pay an annual charge of £5, and those older than this an annual charge of £10. The charge was not reclaimable from the College.

Robert Mansfield said that at the previous meeting of the Committee an item relating to prospective students had been held over, because the students who had raised the matter were not present. No-one was able to clarify this item and it was agreed that it should be withdrawn.

Suzanne Overton-Edwards advised the meeting that the new Gateway film and other films, including one made by students to promote Performing Arts, had been recently completed. These would be used on visits to schools, and she recommended students to see them. The films had been very well received by everyone who had seen them.

**L/15/09 Item 4 – Committee's Terms of Reference:**

Robert Mansfield briefly presented the Committee's terms of reference, including the definition of its quorum. The Committee was an important channel of communication with the Board. The Committee was empowered to raise almost any matter of concern, but could not involve itself in individual cases of conduct or discipline.

**The Committee noted its terms of reference.**

**L/15/10 Item 5 – Issues of Immediate Interest or Concern:**

*The Street, including the TVs*

Nishil Unadkat said that the chairs in the Street were inconveniently placed, with the result that there was chaos at times of heavy traffic. Suzanne Overton-Edwards explained that the chairs had been moved because during the previous academic year student cliques had dominated certain parts of the Street, in effect creating 'no go' areas. This was unacceptable. Gayatri Mistry said that the current layout gave rise to more intimidation than before, and she urged that the

furniture should be dispersed. Ravina Shah said that the current layout had led to troublesome students knocking on the windows of the LRC and causing distraction. John Turner said that it appeared that there were known groups of trouble-makers and that the students were the problem that needed to be resolved. Agnese Arhipova said that some students were taking to walking along the landings on the first and second levels in order to avoid intimidation on the Street. John Turner said that this was a matter for staff to resolve.

**SOE**

Nishil Unadkat described what was displayed on the TVs on the Street as outdated, irrelevant and irritatingly repetitive. He believed that the TVs should be used to promote current events. Gayatri Mistry observed that some current College events were promoted in this way. Suzanne Overton-Edwards invited suggestions on what should be broadcast. Mercedes Petrie proposed examples of interesting features of courses and trips. It was suggested that highlights of national and international news should be shown at break times. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would need to check regulations on this point. Aayush Pabari asked that broadcasts should be as positive as possible; however it was accepted that important news was sometimes negative. Suzanne Overton-Edwards advised the meeting that the TV facility did not have a full-time manager, nor could the College afford to employ one; she would however discuss this matter with the College's technical staff. Liz Ward suggested that a group of students might be involved. Two issues had been highlighted in earlier discussions: the number of screens and the content that students would like to view. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would identify the member of staff who might most appropriately take this matter forward. Liz Ward said that she would organise a group of students. Suzanne Overton-Edwards advised that expectations should not be set too high.

**SOE**

**EW**

#### *Communication*

Agnese Arhipova said that the internal promotion of events, including charitable fund-raising, was usually confined to three or four A4 posters. The result was that students were generally unaware of the publicity. Sarah Gannon said that events were usually publicised via email, but students as a rule failed to check their College email accounts. Agnese Arhipova suggested that Progress Coaches should be charged with promoting College events to students. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said students needed to take responsibility for reading their emails and not to look for ways of opting out. Progress Coaches were already busy. A 'halfway' solution was needed. Agnese Arhipova said that teachers did not stress the importance of email. Suzanne Overton-Edwards asked for suggestions to address the issue raised. Gayatri Mistry said that she had found nothing as effective as promoting events in person. Harshad Solanki said that for working adults email was a way of life, and that students needed to adopt this. However he accepted that those students whose first language was not

English might find email and texting less accessible, so other forms of advertising were also needed. John Turner asked why the College did not make more use of texting. Liz Ward said that it was currently very difficult to organise cross-College texts as the College was in transition between IT systems. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that it should soon be possible to send cross-College texts again. Kunal Amlani suggested that the College should text students to remind them to check their emails. Liz Ward urged all student representatives to promote the importance of regularly checking emails. She undertook to talk to the IT Technicians about the importance of being able to send cross-College texts. It was then stated that most students did not know how to access their College emails via their phones. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would speak with Paul Taylor about sending instructions to all students about how to do this, maybe by setting up a stall in the Street. John Turner urged that typed instructions should be handed to every student.

**EW**

**SOE**

#### *Facilities*

Nishil Unadkat asked whether students were allowed to use empty classrooms. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that students might use such rooms with the agreement of the appropriate member of staff, provided that the students did not then request teacher support. Agnese Arhipova said that she had been ejected from a pod by teachers with classes. It would be helpful if timetables could be posted so that students could see when rooms were free.

Nishil Unadkat said that in some areas there was a shortage of male toilets and asked that the balance between male and female should be redressed. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that in the original layout of the College male and female toilets had alternated; this had been changed because of trouble caused by male students previously. She agreed to look into the current arrangement to see if change was appropriate.

**SOE**

Several students challenged the rental charges made in the canteen for cutlery, especially as it appeared that much cutlery was in fact discarded by canteen staff. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she could offer no immediate comment. She was aware that losses of cutlery had been a longstanding problem. Students suggested a trial period without charges. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would discuss this matter with Midshires. John Turner asked for a report from Midshires on the level of losses of cutlery.

**SOE**

#### *Weed / Smoking Shelters*

Nishil Unadkat said that he objected to the prevalent smell of weed when he entered the College, and asked why staff could not investigate when incidents were reported. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that when students were caught action was taken, but it was very difficult to catch offenders in the act. Offenders under the influence were usually sent home, with an instruction to come back with their parents. The College had

no powers of search. She would welcome suggestions. Various suggestions were then made about relocating the smoking shelters away from the entrance to the College, where the greatest risk of reputational damage existed. Sarah Gannon said that surely the issue was that students should not be smoking. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would consider what further action was practicable.

**SOE**

#### *IT*

Gayatri Mistry reported that the USB ports on most computers in the pods did not work. Either the USB stick was not recognised, or opening the contents caused the computer to freeze. This was not a problem in the LRC. Suzanne Overton-Edwards undertook to investigate this matter.

**SOE**

It was then stated that in G Block and the Sports Hall the laptops either did not work or were in insufficient supply. Sarah Gannon said that part of the problem was that students failed to charge the laptops but agreed that there was a shortage. Nishil Unadkat criticised the College's decision to purchase iPADs when laptops were in his view more useful to students. John Turner said that the College every year made a substantial investment in IT for the benefit of students and planned to continue to do so. Suzanne Overton-Edwards requested that students reported the devices that did not work, since without specific identification it was difficult to institute effective action. Nishil Unadkat thought that the College should email teachers that they should respond to students' reported problems by contacting Paul Taylor. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would discuss with Paul Taylor how best to address the problem.

**SOE**

#### *Sports*

Ravina Shah said that girls felt intimidated when entering the Sports Hall unless a female instructor was present. Many students were unaware that there was a female-only session. Girls were much more ready to attend such sessions. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that these sessions had been heavily publicised through fliers in the previous academic year; she would check on the current situation. She asked Ravina Shah to be active in letting other female students know about the female-only session. Mercedes Petrie urged that the female instructor should make an appeal to female students. Agnese Arhipova said that girls were discouraged, as a result of prior experience at school, by the presence of male instructors. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would investigate what could be done, perhaps with the help of Loughborough College. Agnese Arhipova urged that there should be opportunities both for those who wanted to 'play professionally' and for those who just wanted to have fun.

**SOE**

#### *Teacher Absence*

Mercedes Petrie and Agnese Arhipova both raised concerns about teachers cancelling lessons without sending text messages to students to let them know. This led to wasted bus journeys and time that could have been better used. Sarah

Gannon said it was impractical to expect staff who found themselves ill in the morning to send texts to perhaps 100 or more students. Suzanne Overton-Edwards wanted to know how widespread this problem was. Nishil Unadkat thought that if some teachers were able to send texts about cancelled lessons, all should be able to do so. Sarah Gannon said that the circumstances of individual sick teachers varied. Nishil Unadkat said that the problem was not limited to sick teachers. Sarah Gannon explained that teachers unable to take lessons were required to telephone the College before 8.00 a.m. and to set work for their classes. Harshad Solanki asked whether there was not a facility through which students could check whether their teacher was absent. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would talk to Directors of Studies with a view to their reminding staff of the agreed process for dealing with absences. John Turner saw this as a problem for IT – if all teachers' timetables and student cohorts were held on the system, texting students affected by staff absences should be a straightforward matter. Suzanne Overton-Edwards said that she would investigate this suggestion. Abdifatah Abdi said that in the previous academic year the *GLIDE* system had shown which teachers were at work.

SOE

SOE

***The Committee considered items raised by students and agreed next steps as recorded above.***

**L/15/10 Item 6 – Date and Time of Next Meeting:**

The date and time of the next meeting were confirmed as Monday 29 February 2016 at 4.14 p.m. at the College.

**L/15/11 Item 7 – Any Other Business:**

There was no other business.