

STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting 2/20

15 July 2020

Present: Dakota Titmus (Chair), Navchaa Tumurbaatar (Secretary), Prof Daniel Zizzo, Mr Carl Sherwood, A/Prof Peter Earl, Prof Alicia Rambaldi, Arita Puriso, Ragini Chopra Ashok, Phuong Linh Tran, Grace Reinhold, Elli Price (BEL Communication), Phiet Le, Nikhil Dugar, Connor Harvey, Erin Allport

1. Apologies: Ms Megan Sandaver, Abigail Smith, Benjamin Scott, Vinh Vi Ly Hoai, Chelsea van der Merwe, Tooru Nishido, Patrick Duenow, Machel Tamani

2. Confirmation of the Minutes from the previous meeting

Confirmed

3. Business Arising from the previous Minutes

Nil

4. Standing items

1. COVID-19 situation and its impact on SoE

a. Tuition fee changes with respect to Government announcement

Prof Zizzo explained that the proposal on changes in higher education sector, firstly, aims to support education of the First Nations. In this respect, UQ welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Secondly, it aims to improve accessibility of higher education, especially in remote areas. In this respect, UQ sits in a better position. Lastly, there will be funding for research which is good news. The Government is to fund courses and studies in line with the national skills priority 2023. At this stage due to lack of data in details, it is unclear how or to what extent this will affect UQ.

In terms of tuition fee of domestic students, the school expects an increase of 15 percent as a result of this changes. UQ has started financial modelling taking an account of this reform, however, the details are unknown. Overall, investment in higher education in Australia is among the lowest compared to other OECD countries. It is a disappointing reform which is not reflecting the value of universities. Therefore, UQ is taking actions to convince the federal senates to vote against this change.

Prof Rambaldi further added it is important to note here that the reform will not affect the international students. Also, it is a proposal at this stage and needs to go through an Australian Government, and we do not know what will happen.

b. Potential changes in program and courses

In response to questions in relation to teaching delivery modes in the future as well as potential suspension of courses due to low number of student enrolment caused by COVID-19, Prof Zizzo stated that followings:

- In the short term, the School is offering courses in online mode as some international students are still abroad. There was a significant fall, around 50 percent, in the number of students which puts lots of financial pressure on UQ causing \$200 million expected drop in the 2020 reserve while putting action in cost savings. Although, UQ is at better position compared to other universities

STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting 2/20

15 July 2020

due to its large cash reserve, we cannot guarantee continuation of some elective courses in the short term.

- In the medium term, Semester 1, 2021 does not look promising due to the emerging second wave in Victoria. The plan was for ACT and SA is to run an international student corridor trial to bring them back to their state and territory but this has now been paused.
- In the long-term, online delivery mode will be available more. Having said that, face to face mode is still the corner stone of teaching and learning. During undergraduate Program Architecture 2 review, there was one clear message from student and alumni, that was choice and flexibility are valuable. Therefore, flexibility in teaching delivery modes is expected.

2. Student feedback

a. Academic integrity and plagiarism.

Secretary informed high number of potential plagiarism cases were observed in a first-year course at postgraduate level. This is unfair for students who are working hard to get good marks, whereas others simply use other's work. This could also affect the future tutoring quality as high GPA is one of the criteria in tutor recruitment process.

Mr Sherwood informed the School is fully aware of this issue and have received higher number of potential plagiarism cases in semester 1. Currently, the School is in the process of interviewing students who may have breached academic integrity policy and as a result, some students received zero mark as penalty. Having said that, there appears to be many students not fully aware of academic integrity policy. The School is working hard to find ways to address this issue, including possibility of making academic integrity module as a compulsory task before releasing marks. At the same time, with online mode of delivery, the School is trying to find out better ways of assessing students which prevents cheating. There is even a discussion to make it criminal offence if someone offers to complete an assessment for others.

Prof Zizzo and Prof Rambaldi agree this is a long-standing problem and needs to be tackled better. The School encourages all students and staff to report any cases that may have breached academic integrity policy.

ACTION: Mr Sherwood to raise this matter at Education Committee meeting on 11 Aug.

b. Extension of dual programs:

Currently, there are only couple of dual programs available at postgraduate level. The Secretary enquired about possibility of extending dual programs, specifically with health economics program, where students can choose their studies based on their interest and career pathway.

Prof Zizzo informed program architecture review of postgraduate courses has started and expect to offer the revised programs from 2022. Given that there are small number of students in some programs, combining them may not be possible. The School also must consider trade-off between variety of dual programs vs possibility of confusion

STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting 2/20

15 July 2020

caused by large choice of dual programs. The School will seek students' feedback on postgraduate programs in due course as part of program architecture review.

3. The committee visibility

a. Communication plan:

Ellie Price from BEL Marketing expressed her interest to support economics students on regular basis. Prof Zizzo requested to pay further attention on SSLC visibility and recruitment of new SSLC members. Prof Rambaldi further suggested SSLC to have clear objectives as well as a clear recruitment process and criteria.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary to liaise with Ms Price on the communication plan

b. Alumni meeting:

Secretary informed the initial plan of having panel discussion event with UQ alumni and industry representative is no longer applicable due to abundance of webinars provided on post COVID-19 situation. Also, as informed by the BEL Marketing team, timing of the event is very critical as there has been difficulty in engaging audience in online environment. For these reasons, Committee decided not to pursue this event, however, members are encouraged to submit ideas and suggestions.

4. SSLC member recruitment 2021

a. Prof Zizzo expressed SSLC is an important channel to hear feedbacks from economics students. One thing to improve is SSLC visibility. For new member recruitment process, it should be a student driven process and students are to be present in the selection panel.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary to lead the SSLC members recruitment process.

5. Items for information

Postgraduate orientation session for semester 2 intake is planned on 29 July 2020 and looking for PG students to share their experience.

Provision of summer/winter research projects will depend on the financial situation of the School.

The Chair expressed his gratitude on behalf of economics students on the actions taken by the School to accommodate teaching delivery during COVID-19 situation.

6. Policies due for review

Nil

7. Next meeting

Sep 2020 – the exact date to be advised.