

Deputy President Education Report to Union Council July 2021

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Hey everyone, hope you're having a lovely summer break and enjoying some well-deserved time off. This is my last council report as DPE, so I thought I'd take a slightly different approach. I am including a summary of where I got with some of my manifesto goals and some general reflections on the year. Most of this is plagiarised from some papers that went to the Board of Trustees so please don't try submitting this report to TurnItIn.

Things that are still on fire

I am writing this report with just two days left until handover, but it seems like the influx of new things to work on never stops. Some things I am still dealing with right now include the whole debate about **lectures being in-person or online next year**, planning for **the new NSS response**, analysing some **survey data about teaching and exams** and a bunch of other bits and bobs the College still want my opinion on. Happy to tell you more about each of these if you'd like me to elaborate.

Objectives for the year & where I got to with them

Objective	Update
1. Work on the implementation of the NSS recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Produced the NSS reports, which included recommendations for the College and coordinating separate recommendations for each department written by the dep reps - We got College buy-in for the College-wide recommendations with staff assigned to each one of them - Progress has been mixed - Very little / no follow up on progress in departments by the reps <p>NSS recommendation completed / partially completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the SOLE survey – this will be replaced for next AY - Marking transparency – some limited changes being implemented for next year, but not anywhere near all of them - Work on spaces around campus – more work done in departments as well as shared spaces with direct student involvement <p>No/very little progress on (mostly because of lack of capacity on both our and College's side):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review management of staff - Review student welfare in departments - Improve timetabling support / release - Improve communications
2. Strengthen the Rep Network	<p>Things that happened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular meetings with the Faculty reps and Research AWOs to support them in the role - Some meetings with some dep reps - Sharing ideas and seeking rep feedback on College-wide decisions through Teams channels (to some extent) - Rep of the month, rep of the year awards – recognition - Reps involved early on in the NSS work <p>Things that did not happen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved training - Regular meetings with dep reps every couple of months - Improved platform for sharing of ideas

	- Recording of progress and proper reporting of what is going on
3. Review the PG rep network	<p>What has been done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultation with PG reps at different levels (year/course, department, faculty) - Discussions with other officers from other universities about PG representation – we’re doing quite well actually! <p>Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student reps do not want things to change drastically, because whatever they have in whichever department works for them locally - We will aim to appoint a “departmental rep” in each department next year, even if that means just choosing a "more responsible" year/group rep - Work still needs to be done to improve how we collaborate with departmental admins, but this cannot be done without a rep coordinator in post

General reflections on the role:

When we were running for our roles back in March 2020, I don’t think anyone expected to spend the year in lockdown. The election results night happened on the same day as the announcement that all teaching and exams would move online for the rest of the year, and back then the pandemic still seemed like something that would be over quickly. The fact that the whole year would be so affected was not obvious even when we started, and I don’t think it was until October that we realised that things wouldn’t get to normal any time soon and we were destined to spend our sabbatical year on Teams.

At the beginning

Even though I came into the role as qualified as I possibly could’ve been – after having spent all my four undergraduate years as a rep and three years on council – the first couple of months felt quite hard and were all about finding my footing. For many weeks I felt like I didn’t have a lot of useful stuff to contribute in College meetings, didn’t know and hadn’t met almost anyone I was working with, and struggled staying productive while working on my own from home. This was not made easier by the fact that Shervin and Abhijay stayed on and seemed to have College representation covered between the two of them - I almost felt redundant, like ICU was used to functioning without a DPE just fine!

Feeling a bit lost and useless is something I always experience whenever I start a new role, so I knew it would pass eventually (it did), but it wasn’t helped by the fact that induction was very limited by the pandemic. We certainly suffered from not being on campus at all at the start – this meant teambuilding was really difficult – and from the Union not having enough capacity to properly help us settle in.

Some things that went well / key achievements

Some bullet points only, read more [here](#) if you’re interested.

Rep engagement

- Engaging dep reps in the NSS response
- Keeping in touch with reps despite no staff support in the team
- Having regular catchups with Faculty reps and some of the engaged dep reps

NSS Response

- Much better format than in previous years (according to the Union as well as the College, and also according to my own opinion)
- Engaging dep reps meant better coverage & in-depth analysis
- Recommendations were strong, and would’ve led to good improvement if the year was normal and there was no pandemic

Digital Education Recording Policy

- Panopto for everyone from now on, yay!

Package of No Detriment measures

- Without our proper lobbying of the College, the following would not have happened:
 1. Making sure students in different timezones don't have to take exams in the middle of the night
 2. Resit opportunities for all students, including PGT students
 3. Cohort-wide "safety net" guarantee that this year's students would not do worse than students in the past

PG representation

- New Academic Rep Forums meant PG reps were much more engaged
- Regular catchups meant I was more aware and understanding of PG issues
- We did these good things for PG students:
 - o Covid impact statements on PhD theses
 - o Work on stipend extensions
 - o Outreach recognition work kickstarted this year
 - o More PG involvement in discussions about spaces

The team

- There were ups and downs but I think the OT team was really great this year!

Some things that could've been better

Again, bullet points only, more info [here](#)

Staff support

- Didn't have a single staff member on the rep team for six months – not great!
- It felt like people in the ICU leadership often didn't know or care what the rep team (i.e. myself and Shervin) were working on, and were not really offering any meaningful support

Rep support & engagement

- It was good at the start but I definitely stopped engaging the reps as much as I should've later in the year
- I should've supported the Taught AWOs much better
- Our PG rep database was incomplete, so a lot of reps probably never heard from me and I never knew they were reps

Training

- I wanted a proper improved rep training programme, but we never had the time to do it / it was never a priority
- One of my main regrets in the role, as I believe a good and early training for reps is really important and can make a real difference in their roles

NSS response follow-up

- Our NSS response was good, but the follow up was not great
- A lot of the recommendations were never adopted because we didn't push the College enough
- There was not a lot capacity in the College to think about it, so even if we pushed a lot we probably would not have achieved much more

Conclusion

Overall, I feel like I did a lot of important work this year, but often don't have a lot to show for it. Many hours were sunk into operational stuff and responding to the whole pandemic situation, which meant that many of the things I wanted to do in the role did not end up happening. It's a shame that I didn't

manage to achieve a good number of my goals for the year, and I certainly have some regrets about that.

Of course I would have liked to have a normal year instead. It would've been nice to have more time and support to do the things I originally hoped to do, achieve some real change in the role, do everything in person, be able to go to Singapore and have all of the free food in College meetings. But at the end of the day, I didn't sign up to do this job for my own pleasure and to have a good time. I wanted to help improve students' education and use my knowledge and rep experience to represent students where and when it is most important. It almost doesn't matter if I had the year I wanted; all that matters is if the students had the DPE they needed this year, and I think it was good that it ended up being me.

Lastly, as you democratically decided in the last meeting, I am attaching some more pictures of all the cuties who helped me get through this year!

