



Vice President Academic Affairs Report

May

SUggestions – F.Lux on Library Computers – To Be Completed!

F.lux is a program that adjusts a display's colour temperature according to location and time of day. The program was designed to reduce eye strain during night-time use and reduce disruption of sleep patterns, but can be customised or turned off should the user not wish to use it. As Student Leaders, we support this idea, as we feel it would only be of benefit to the students. Since my last report, ICT have confirmed that this will be installed on library and open space computers ready for the next academic year.

Suggestions – Plotter in AAD west 4th floor

An SUggestion was submitted to have a plotter installed on the 4th floor of AAD West. Since my last report, I will now sit on the University's Print Board, where all printing placement and logistics are discussion, and the plotter will be raised there! This planned for June.

Subject Level TEF Consultation:

On the 9th of May, academic representatives of the University of Lincoln Students' Union attended a monthly forum, within which the consultation of the Subject-Level Teaching Excellence and Outcomes Framework was discussed.

From the outset there is a consensus in the room that the principle of Teaching Excellence and Outcomes Framework (TEF) is welcomed, to provide student with clear information surrounding the teaching quality of an institution, thus raising the profile of taught degrees, and institutions with that of a greater teaching Focus. However, a large concern within this is the selection of metrics used to measure the performance.

As a student at the University of Lincoln, this creates a difficult position for our students. For example, the reduced weighting of the National Student Survey (NSS) within the TEF and the inclusion of the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data means that Universities will be rated by how much money their graduates earn, despite their satisfaction and career choice.

In terms of the Subject level TEF, it was again a consensus that something of this nature should exist, as it provides students with clear information around the teaching quality both of an institution, and the individual subject of choice. In regards to the 2 suggested models, Members preferred the style of Model A whereby an independent provider level rating is given and a subject level rating is given. Member particularly like the use of the exceptions subjects, where courses with performance metrics that are not in line with prover metrics would be given a full assessment, providing greater clarity to student. It also allows members to choose to stay at an institution, but consider other courses within said institution. Members were against the idea of Model B as they felt that individual subjects should not directly influence the provider level rating.

Members felt that the design of the categories of subjects raised concern. This is because they were fearful that some lower rated subjects may affect the rating of other subjects, and vice versa. This also added to preference of Model A as many of these subjects may be considered exceptions.

With Regards to metrics used within the subject level TEF, members feel strongly about the use of the written submission, and allowing student representatives from the respective areas to work in partnership with staff on its development. When presented with questions over what should inform teaching intensity, members agreed that whilst there is no perfect answer, the right answer is not that solely of teaching intensity. Instead, an approach of measuring the engagement of teaching resources including digital resources and assignments should be taken, with providers stating information on how courses or modules are experiences by learning as students, including contact hours, and expectations of independent learning.

Post-18 Funding Review

On the 25th of April the Students' Union held an All Student Members meeting where 204 students gathered to discuss topics including the government's post 18 funding review. From this, a student led response was submitted as follows;

The University of Lincoln Students' Union held an All Student Members' Meeting in April 2018, which was attended by 204 student members. Members highlighted that their principle concern was that whilst the cost of going to University was high, the consensus was that significantly higher levels of stress was felt around how much money students' had whilst at University, as opposed to how much debt they left with.

Members noted that they had chosen to go into Higher Education rather than Further Education on the basis that they felt or were told that a degree was necessary to get into their respective career pathways, and onto graduate schemes. They also noted that more than an undergraduate degree was needed to get into some fields e.g. high level sports studies, where a masters or PhD is necessary. Members hold value that the title 'University of' in institution's names encouraged students to go into Higher Education as this appeared to be an important status symbol to employers, which was a particular priority for International Members and for members who are first in their family to go to University.

Despite the push on different education options, the consensus of members at the University of Lincoln was that there is not currently a comprehensive range of high quality alternative routes for those who wish to peruse a different path. We feel that there is a perception where the employment market requires you to have a degree to get a high level, well-paid job. Members also felt that a degree enables an individual to keep their career options open, whereas apprenticeships etc. tie them into just one career route. They also noted that the facilities the University of Lincoln provides were excellent, and this outweighed the route of study. One quite prominent theme around alternative routes was a lack of faith in the apprenticeship system in regards to pay and due diligence from particular organisations.

Members raised a number of barriers to succeeding in Higher Education for members from all backgrounds. As previously mentioned, There was a significant consensus that we feel more stress regarding the money they have during their time at University rather than the debt at the end of the degree, advocating that there should be a reconsideration of student finance and the loans and grants system. Students also raised concerns regarding the additional course costs on top of the cost of the degree which need to be covered, all from students' loans or part-time jobs; the money from which also needs to cover students' ever increasing living costs.

Whilst we feel that a review of post 18 education and funding is welcomed, it should be considered that our members aspire less to find a cheaper or alternative route through education than to be supported financially and informatively throughout their university experience, as that experience is just as important as other factors in their decision to attend University.

Lecture Recording Working Group

Academic Board (April 2018) have requested that a small cross institutional working group look at **devising a plan to enable the adoption of lecture recording across the University from September 2018**. This is in direct response to student feedback for increased access to recorded lectures to assist revision, support additional student learning needs (such as English as a second language or accessibility), deliver equity across all taught programmes and aligns with student expectations across the sector. This will be chaired by Dean of Digital Education, Andy Beggan and myself.

In the kick off meeting it was noted that it would be beneficial to the group to have a member from the Disabled Students Group, in order to give insight to the inclusivity and accessibility needs for those students.

An area that must be considered is the use of additional materials within lectures in regards to copyright laws. Other institutions have policies relating to this matter such as LSE which should be explored in order to ensure that teaching experience remains consistent.

In line with consent laws, there is a need to distinguish between students who are mildly dissatisfied with being recorded and students who absolutely do not consent.

In line with Student Views, there was a lean towards the idea of providing audio and slides as a standard as opposed to automatically recording video. This is a common misconception amongst staff and must be communicated.

The possibility of moving to an Opt-out scenario for automatic lecture recording using a legal basis as part of our organisational task to deliver teaching of the highest quality. However, the fear of this is the cultural divide that this could create amongst staff and students.

It was felt by all that with any policies that need to be absolutely explicit with supporting guidance provided.

Thanks

I would like to thank everybody for their incredibly hard work this year. It has been a pleasure to work with each and every student to ensure their academic interests are being represented through our amazing reps. I cannot wait to continue this work into the next academic year!