

Faculty Representatives Termly Report

2017-18 (Termly Report 2)

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Your Faculty & Role: Bartlett & Faculty Rep (Postgraduate Research)

Faculty Priorities:

In term two, I still attended as almost all faculty meetings as in term one. In all feedback reported by (lead) department reps, the space issue in Bartlett is still the most pressing. In the different students surveys (like PRES 2017 or Student Space Survey), they all show students care about their research space, teaching space and common space. In the PRES 2017, the most three important issues of students are space, research culture, and communication, and the Bartlett faculty also agreed to take actions on these three issues and keep discussing with the Doctoral school. I think these three issues are closely related to each other. A healthy research culture counts on an ideal research environment, so the space will be the key point. If doctoral students cannot get their personal space in the department, then they will hardly find they belong to the department and even there is no motivation to work in the department. Working in the department and discussing with their colleagues are very important and precious experience during their PhD period, because they learn how to being an independent research from others' experience. Therefore, making sure doctoral students willing to come and willing to stay in the department rather than libraries or research hubs or even coffee shops is very important. Besides, I also noticed the space survey is not only run by the faculty or college staff, but also run by students themselves at the department level. It shows students pressing need of working space. As for the communication issue, I found sometimes students know few about how to and where to reply their opinions, and sometimes I also noticed the department reps didn't get involved very well. I think a very important reason is the attitude of the department. The department should take student reps very seriously because they are willing to sacrifice their time to help public student affairs. The student reps are responsible to the students in their departments, but some of them said to me they don't feel work closely with the department staff. On the contrary, they feel they were just for achieving the criteria of meetings. Therefore, how to make student reps further participating in the department administrative work would be helpful. To be honest, only three department SSCC meetings every year in one term of reps service are not enough. Once departments miss one of them, especially the second SSCC meeting, the student reps will lose their chances to discuss and reply opinions. The second SSCC meeting is the most important one meeting in a year, because reps get used to their role and still have time to collect opinions from students and report them in the third SSCC meeting, so at least we had better to make sure it happens as scheduled.

Meetings in the Faculty:

In the Faculty Research Degrees Committee (FRDC) meeting, the Bartlett intended not to hold our own faculty 3MT competition this year, because there were few students participants last year and even hard to recruit participants. They asked my opinion about it, and I checked this year UCLU won't organise the 3MT (3 minutes thesis) first round which students can participate in with winners progressing to the UCL final 3MT final round in June. In the previous years, If we faculty does not hold the first round 3MT, students can attend the first round held by UCLU. However, in this year, the first round will only be held by the faculty, so I am not sure whether or not there will be more students interested in the Bartlett 3MT this year. After all, it will be the only chance if they want to join the competition. I mentioned it would be not necessary for the PGR students to participate in, but some students would still be interested in having one unless they have another better chance (like a formal conference). I promised to ask more opinions from students, and ask the possibility of holding the competition depending on the number of signing up and submitting? (In the web page of UCL 3MT, it mentioned students should contact their Faculty to find out when they will be holding their 3 Minute Thesis Competition). The committee also agreed to offer fund a faculty 3MT event if Bartlett research students felt it high enough priority to organise by ourselves. Therefore, I consulted with other student reps if they would like to organise a dedicated 3MT event. For the students who are interested in presenting their research, thanks CPM will run a Bartlett-wide doctoral student led conference in June, and it will give students another opportunity to present.

Meetings with the Union:

I attended one informal meeting organised by the education officer, Sarah. In the meeting, one lead department rep and I raised some difficulties we reps meet, because most of time seldom doctoral students are willing or having time to reply our mail. However, I tried to make the process simple, like making a quick survey (less than 10 questions). I think the space issue is still the first priority in my faculty, and how to let doctoral students easy to find a meeting room, working space or discussion place should need the UCLU's help. The continuously growing tuition fee is also another important issue among students, and there are different rules of tuition fee across the UCL. In Bartlett, the doctoral students have to pay the fourth year tuition fee if they don't transfer to CRS on time. I have ever heard there is another different rule in different faculty (students don't need to pay for the fourth year tuition fee no matter whether they enter CRS or not). Therefore, I think it would be helpful for students in my faculty, Union can help us to check the different rules across different faculties, and even make them the same.

Other comments:

Just like I mentioned before, I found not every departments take student reps very seriously, and sometimes they don't think it would be a big deal if one of department SSCC meetings is missed. Therefore, how to make sure and emphasise the reps' role in the departments would be very important. If it cannot be achieved, the communication between students and staff will still remain a gap, and the student reps will not have enough information from departments to report students they represent and will not collect enough opinions to report to either the faculty rep or Students' Union UCL.