

Faculty of Arts Student Forum 2

Meeting 2: 14 May, 2024

Minutes taken by Chandler (Student Programs)

Topic 1: Assessment Design & Feedback (lead by Anastasia)

Question 1: What do you look for in your curriculum and assessment?

- Online assessments can be challenging at times, especially if students are non-native English speakers
- Online assessments do not provide enough time for non-native English speakers to get through all questions
- More time is needed on timed assessments
- Online assessments need to be explicit about how many questions there are and allow students to see all the questions and move between them
- More guidance on how to approach assessment tasks and exams

Question 2: What does useful feedback look like?

- Feedback is usually unclear (and what is the purpose of it?)
- Students go to tutors for essay support, but then there is a large disparity between quality of feedback/support between tutors
- Some tutors report working unpaid hours to support students with essays
- There is confusion around where students can go for essay support
- Because some tutors go above and beyond, it creates different outcomes for each student
- It's frustrating for students because the quality of support isn't consistent, and it's unclear if tutors are meant to provide this additional support or not
- Feedback is most helpful when it gears students towards the next assessment (i.e. "this is what you can improve next time" etc.)
- Example essay or example paragraphs are very helpful (from tutors), but not always provided (especially for first year students)
- Having a breadth of examples (i.e. different ways to structure an essay) are necessary
- Students are unclear about how to meet standards
- Sometimes additional support is provided at a one-on-one consultation with a tutor, but not provided to larger cohort

- Tutors are hard to get hold of outside of office hours, where students are often competing for time with the tutor
- Academic Skills could be more present, or resources made more available
- More opportunities for peer feedback should be implemented

Question 2: Is the diversity in the cohort reflected in the curriculum & assessment?

- Generally subject content is diverse, and provides multiple viewpoints
 - However, this is dependent on the subject and subject coordinator (some try to provide more points of view and diverse voices, but this depends on the person and is not standardized)
 - Indigenous voices are uplifted, but not enough context is given to international students (domestic students who have been through the AU schooling system would already have been exposed to this)
 - Readings are predominantly Euro-centric, or Western-centric
 - There aren't enough voices from non super-power countries, and how those voices influence international politics and perspectives
 - Often a very White lens
 - Tutors should encourage more debate amongst students
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Topic 2: Financial Stress (lead by Jahnvi)

Question 1: What stresses are you under in terms of employment or accommodation?

- Cost of living has caused higher rental rates (even in Student Accommodation)
- Student Housing has raised prices but is not offering enough support
- University accommodation is too expensive
- One student was given less than a week to vacate student housing (more notice is needed)
- There are some scholarships available, but not enough
- Students are prioritizing work, rather than going to lectures and joining clubs
- What is in the University's control? The UoM can lower food prices for on-campus food options (e.g. Student Pavilion), and provide more free food to students when appropriate (i.e. at Arts events)

- Students need to seek out free food events themselves or use services available (via my.unimelb) that provide free food (fresh and frozen)
- Taking work off requires health documentation, but is often very hard to obtain
- Students are confused about health services on campus
- Students are living farther away from campus due to rising rent prices, so must travel long commutes to get to campus
- Public transportation is expensive (can there be a Myki discount?)
- UoM parking is very expensive (can a provision for parking be provided?)
- Finding work is challenging, and there aren't enough resources to help students
- UoM needs to recognize and prioritize work life balance
- UoM needs to have more direct opportunities here on campus aimed at part-time work (volunteer opportunities and paid internships)

Question 2: How does the University empower students to leave toxic jobs & other environments? Is there information about Workers' and Renters' rights?

- As there aren't enough opportunities to work on campus, students are traveling long distances for work and leaving a potential toxic environment is therefore a low priority
- Students can utilize Careers and Employability more
- Not all internships are equitable (some are only available for domestic students)
- International students have the same working rights as domestic students, but this isn't necessarily clear
- Faculty should promote Students@Work program more
- Support is needed for transition leaving UoM into career space
- International renters are not familiar with local laws and are being exploited; there should be a package or info shared to students with resources on their rights
- Can there be workshops or resources on how to get necessities and perform basic tasks (e.g. Wi-Fi, electricity, apartment hunting, etc.)?

Topic 3: Student Action & Voice (lead by Alessia)

Question 1: What do you expect from the University in times of protest? This includes:

- i. Discussions and classroom behaviours*
- ii. Support & safe spaces*
- iii. Culturally safe language*

- A great example of UoM showing support was providing Special Consideration to First Nations students during The Referendum
- Some students would prefer Academics to not lecture students on their political views, and for politics to be kept out of the classroom
- However, most students disagree with the above, and believe it's crucial that current topics are being discussed in the classroom
- Pretending issues don't exist/are glossed over is inappropriate (Academics do not need to offer their opinion, but *should* be creating a safe space with mediated discussion)
- Tutors are very inconsistent in terms of their training (i.e. how to navigate difficult conversations)
- Tutors need to be trained on how to have effective conversations in the classroom
- By ignoring reality, it is silencing voices/erasing trauma
- There are antisemitic images on campus (e.g. Star of David with massive red X in the Arts bathrooms)
- All students should feel safe on campus, and personal attacks need to be avoided
- FoA needs to facilitate respectful and critical conversations
- Student Forum is one outlet for this
- The FoA could have panel discussions where experts explain the issues, which will also stop misinformation and facilitate discussions in an Academic setting
- UoM needs to provide space for discussions and leaning into the issues (i.e. Israel and Palestine conflict)
- Students want the Uni to foster knowledge sharing and education on major issues
- There need to be better policies in place to deal with hate speech (or better enforcement)

Question 2: How does the University foster the importance of student expression?

- There should be more opportunities for students to come together and discuss major issues
- UoM can do more to encourage critical discussions, allowing students to disagree (this can be practiced in class on a small scale), but a strong moderator is needed
- On a larger scale, there can be an informative panel discussion to educate students about major issues
- Subject coordinators can include opportunities in assessments for students to explore different viewpoints (e.g. students being able to pick their own case study)

- Assessments can be more open-ended, which allows students to explore topics that interest them