

INTRODUCTION AND INTEGRATION OF THE ‘WELLBEING REP’ ROLE INTO THE CURRENT STUDENT REPRESENTATION STRUCTURE

PROPOSER

Connel Greenhorn – H00332398

SECONDER

Frankie Hulme – Vice President Wellbeing

WHAT WILL WE DO?

1. Vice-President Wellbeing, Wellbeing Coordinator, School Officers, and any MPs that are interested, will lobby the university to implement a new Wellbeing Rep position, which will be available to undergraduate and postgraduate students.
2. Explore the different forms of wellbeing training with the university to ensure wellbeing reps have access to timely, reliable, and appropriate resources and materials to help them execute their role.
3. Lobby and encourage academic and wellbeing staff, (e.g., Programme Directors, Year Coordinators, Student Success Advisors) to adopt, trial and communicate the role with teaching staff and students.
4. Provide a supportive and robust network through individual supervisors or team leads, ensuring that Wellbeing Reps have access to support and guidance throughout their role.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND TO THIS?

1. Anna Seda, an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University, and a respected member who sits on the British Psychological Society Educational panel highlighted that the role could provide an ‘opportunity for students to involve themselves in co-creating a nurturing environment, providing a person-focused legacy’, and is, ‘worthy of investing our energies as a community to be pioneers in enhancing wellbeing’ (Seda, 2021).
2. The University of Strathclyde currently run a similar initiative, known as a “Wellbeing Listener”, who, as part of the 'Hear to Listen' wellbeing support service, aim to engage those interested in wellbeing to ‘actively listen’ – not counsel - to the needs of the student. The wellbeing listeners also signpost

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students to specific support and relay their own experiences to build relationships and establish friendly connections.

3. 'StudentMinds', a third-sector organisation founded in the UK, who raise awareness of mental health problems associated with students, illustrate the importance and benefits of increasing opportunities for students to get involved with wellbeing. They also recognise that student involvement can encourage themselves and those around them to become more self-aware and informed about mental, sexual, and financial help available (Piper and Emmanuel, 2013).
4. According to Unite Students, who had undertaken an insight report in collaboration with HEPI (Higher Education Policy Institute) on the UK student population in 2019, it was estimated that around 53% of students with a mental health condition notified their university, with only 23% of them accessing the support services available at their university (Unite Students, 2019).
5. Keith Kilgore, a careers advisor within Registry and Academic Support in Heriot-Watt University, lends his support and recognises the potential that this role could open for university-union collaboration. He extends his approval for the employability value of the role, as it would demonstrate responsibility, representation, and advocacy – all attractive and sought-after attributes by employers.

WHAT BELIEFS MOTIVATE THESE ACTIONS?

1. A lack of voluntary wellbeing opportunities exists in the university and the union for undergraduate and postgraduate students to get involved with. Furthermore, on-going caution surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic calls for greater student involvement in wellbeing. This will improve accessibility to, and stimulate interest in, the position and responsibilities that are attached to bridge the gap between academia and wellbeing.
2. This initiative shall improve, create, and strengthen the connections, and influence between Full-Time Officers and the university to collaborate on the mental wellbeing needs of students across all Scottish campuses.
3. The Student Wellbeing Group in its current form does not embody a large, influential platform from which students and representatives can produce tangible change. The wider participation of wellbeing reps would increase reliable data on the wellbeing concerns of students. It will also place greater emphasis on wellbeing issues and increase the opportunities for discussion surrounding wellbeing and actioning on this accordingly.