EDI Advisory Board – Session 1

Thursday 9 October 2025 10:30–12:30

The Advisory Board Session took place in The Greenhouse, Devonshire House. It was attended by 13 members.

1. Welcome and Introduction

The session began with a welcome from the Campaigns and Democracy Coordinator and Community Empowerment Manager for the Guild. A brief introduction to the session was given.

2. Representation Review Workshop

A short presentation highlighted the importance of inclusive platforms and roles that reflect the diversity of the student body. Students were then given time to think about the Representation Review and start creating models of representation.

Participants were asked to reflect on themes of community support, community cohesion, belonging, equal opportunities and removing barriers

They were asked to discuss what they would like to see when it comes to:

- Representative roles (e.g. part-time officers)
- Platforms (e.g. advisory boards, forums)
- Paid opportunities (e.g. EDI consultants, Community Organisers)

Discussion

The board was split in two groups, each group had time to come up with ideas and shared them back to the whole board.

The first group shared ideas around the need for more community-based events, informal and formal opportunities for feedback and academic advisory boards focused on subject areas.

The second group shared ideas for a model that balances accountability through demographically representative advisory boards with action groups responsible for creating change and shaping the university experience.

The ideas described by each group were shared with the team overseeing the Representation Review.

3. **Welcome and Orientation Workshop**

Students shared their experiences of Welcome Week and the first few weeks at Exeter. They were asked to consider their experiences of pre-arrival, Welcome Week, and weeks 1–3 and share any suggestions they had for improvement.

Pre-Arrival:

The overall sentiment students expressed when it comes to pre-arrival is a feeling of overwhelm, specifically around the communications they receive.

On the one hand, they highlighted receiving too many emails from different sources, communications not being central and therefore not uniform, and finding it hard to navigate the website. On the other hand, the information they received was too broad and they struggled to find what they needed, often having to email and chase different people to find the correct information.

They wished to receive information more specific to their department or studies, as well as more information on their accommodation (who will they live with, what does the flat look like, when does the accommodation guarantee come through), and finally they hoped for more information on post-arrival (including information on societies, their timetable and onboarding).

Their suggestion to avoid information overload whilst still receiving communications tailored to them was to create a guide which would contain all the information they needed.

Welcome Week:

The overall feedback from students around Welcome Week was that the week was fun, they reported that the events and taster sessions they attended were valuable and really helped them build a sense of belonging. They also really valued the freebies and discount vouchers offered out throughout the week.

However, students still reported concerns of information overload, lack of signposting for events specifically for events targeted at diverse groups with students noting the need for more focus on mature students and queer students.

On societies and sports clubs, students reported that whilst they really valued tasters, they found it hard to find information about them and they wanted to see tasters beyond Welcome Week. Some noted that the events held by sport clubs and societies as well as memberships were quite expensive, with suggestions of creating a lottery to win a society or club membership. There was also a sentiment that society and club culture is centred around alcohol which they didn't find inclusive.

Weeks 1–3:

On the first few weeks after Welcome Week, students mainly reported issues around timetabling and clashes with their social life, struggles with navigating campus, need for more support and for more community groups.

On timetabling and navigating campus, they found it hard to access their timetable on the myExeter app and struggled to navigate the different buildings where their classes are located. Students also reported the need for more optimisation of timetables, wanting lectures and seminars to be more spread out. Additionally, changes made to their timetables happened quite late which affected their ability to feel settled in. Beyond academic

timetabling, students reported the need for more opportunities taking place at the weekend including events run by the Guild/University but also events run by societies and sports clubs.

Members of the board also reported issues with lecture recordings not being made available straight away and wanting more hybrid teaching opportunities.

On the need for more support, students highlighted both the need for more practical support (e.g. learning resources, laptops for commuters) as well as better signposting for welfare and study support.

Members of the board also reported wanting more opportunities for connecting with each other, specifically for students who commute or are not living in on-campus accommodation.

4. **Closing**

Members were thanked for their participation, and the meeting was brought to a close.