

**Union Council Minutes - Draft**

**24th January 2017**

**1. Attendance was acknowledged and apologies noted.**

Attended: Ruqiya Ali (RA); Habiba Amjad (HA); Andy Aston (AA); Joshua Barden (JB); Dale Bennett (DB); Nicole Berroa (NB); Sohaib Farooqui (SFa); Ewelina Florczak (EF); Rachael Healey (RH); Iman Hussain (IH); Shazab Islam (SI); Joshua Largent (JL); Ashley Lovell (AL); Ziya Mohamed (ZM); Nishalini Ravindran (NR); Joshua Richardson (JR); Issic Romel (IR); Afsheen Saleem (AS); Liam Slough (LS).

Apologies: Rebecca Baker (RB); Stewart Boyd (SB); Jessica Edwards (JE); Latoya Goldbourne (LG); Daniel Raw (DR).

Absent: Steven Fellows (SFe); Katie Minchin (KM); Jenny Plant (JP).

Staff present: Ann Gough, CEO (CEO); Robin Eves, Chair’s Aide (SV&DC); Dave Anson, Observer (SEM); Thomas Swainson, Secretary (C&DA).

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes from the last meeting, 29th November 2016, were accepted.

**3. Matters arising:**

**Charity of the year -** Officers will be voting on charity of the year this meeting.

**BDS Referendum -** The officers talked to Shaz around the BDS motion he submitted last year. Shaz will be speaking at the next council around the referendum. Council members were asked to research before the next council.

**Littering around campus -** The university have spoken to the council about littering and the cleanliness of the subway. Accessibility is a priority to the council so they will be looking into it.

Littering has been an issue around campus so the SU are looking at running a campaign to try and persuade students to be more considerate with regards to littering.

**Smoking facilities -** smoking shelters are currently being discussed with the facilities team.

**Hot water in the library -** hot water in the library has been addressed.

**Gender neutral toilets -** there’s at least one gender neutral toilet on each campus.

**Basecamp -** SV&DC is adding everyone to a Basecamp group to help officers with collective working.

**Lockers in MB -** The university has contacted the supplier and any broken lockers will be replaced.

**Building names -** all university maps will be updated to reflect the new building names. This is something Geoff is trying to push through as soon as possible. John Elsmore and Cath Clough will be handling this.

**ASC delivered a presentation around appeals as it was raised in the last council**

Caroline explained that with the reduction in appeal time has increased the number and quality of appeals. This reduction in the deadline means that students have appeals resolved before the next academic year as they deadline means they must apply earlier. Academic staff members have also had their holiday process changed so they are available during the periods of were the number of appeals tend to be high. 20 working days also seems to be the sector standard, however complaints are still a 3 month deadline.

NR asked what the deadline was for a late appeal. Caroline replied saying if it’s late there is no second deadline.

**4. Student Issues**

NR said that she thinks council members would benefit on a council away day to improve the relationships between council officers. SV&DC said he thinks it’s a good idea and if council back it we can arrange it.

**Council vote:** 81% yes, 0% no, 19% abstains.

NR said that in April NUS delegates will be attending conference and should we engage more with students before the conference. HA said it depends on what the motion is and that officers were voted by students to make that decision. SI said we’re elected on manifestos and are held accountable on them when we return. SV&DC said we’ll be holding discussions before around the motions so this will be covered. Voting may be discussed during this meeting.

IH said that there has been a huge failure in feedback in FSE with the incorrect algorithm used to work out students’ results. For 4/5 days students had believed they had failed the module and would have to re-sit the year. GG said it’s a reoccurring thing across all faculties with marking and feedback being a huge issue. IH it’s got to a point where the lecturers are bypassed. JR and JL are on a different course and a lecturer has said his PhD is more important than their students work; head of musical theatre; resulting in a lack of feedback for 3rd year students.

SFa has said that they’ve had a lecturer forbid students from approaching them outside of timetabled contact time but their emails don’t make it to the lecturer for some reason. NB said there is policy around feedback and email responses; 4 weeks for feedback and 5 days for email responses. GG said that the quality of the feedback is also a problem, not just the time frame. AL said that their instructions for a presentation were inconsistent resulting in students receiving lower grades.

**Action: HA to talk to Anthea.**

HA also recommended to try and use emails to keep a record of conversations held with lecturers.

NR said that students in FSE have had trouble with WOLF if they have gone through extenuating circumstances as they’re not re-subscribed to that topic. IR said that students need to approach lecturers and they will subscribe them to the topic. NR said that some lecturers can’t do this. DB said that the faculty office have the ability to subscribe students to the topic and the extenuating circumstances wouldn’t have an effect.

**Action: HA and IH to talk to Anthea.**

A student asked about having a microwave on campus for student use. HA responded saying she has spoken to the VC and has a meeting with the health and safety contact in the university around providing these facilities. HA said we’re exploring space in the SU for these facilities. IR said other officers were also pushing for the facilities.

A student said they’d not had access to WOLF topics till later into the term. The course is Religious Studies but other officers claimed they’d had the same issues. IH said it’s a little unprofessional.

Final year musical theatre students have been struggling due to reduction in staff support, with a lecturer being late for meetings and failing to organise observations for their students. The student this was raised on behalf of has tried to talk with the lecturer but daren’t push too hard in case their grades are affected.

HA said she’d investigate but you don’t have to feel you can’t raise something if you’re a course rep.

A 1st year health studies student said have been timetabled with overcrowded rooms and accessibility issues in King’ Street. There are not enough chairs or tables. GG said this has been raised in faculty council and that the dean is being approached about it; it is currently being investigated. HA is meeting with the DVC around facilities.

AS joined the meeting.

AL said that the provisions for cigarette ends can often feed straight into the bin and sets the bin on fire. RH said that facilities are looking at uprating bin provisions.

Religious Studies students have struggled with lighting on an evening at the MX building so students feel safer. HA said the university have a budget for campus life so HA will investigate.

**Action: HA to investigate.**

SI left the meeting.

JL said he had an email from his lecturer around the NSS with the title being “Free pizza (and NSS)” from his musical theatre lecturer.

Elodie Pearce rose that several deaf students feel that some staff have a real lack of deaf awareness and are quite rude to deaf students. Accommodation have been ringing a student which is insensitive. Staff actions have been demoralising to deaf students. There should be more formal processes to help deaf students access university services. IR said he would undertake the issue to raise awareness of students learning needs.

**Action: IR to look at a campaign to raise awareness to specific students learning needs.**

CEO said HA and herself are going to a committee tomorrow with the VC around Student Learning needs and will raise the points. HA acknowledged the frontline staff members of the University are often abrasive and rude so more work should be done to improve this.

A student mentioned that cafeteria staff aren’t provided with the tools and feels as though she may be accidentally patronising students and would like more support. Elodie has invited her to have a chat.

A 1st year psychology rep said that student parents are struggling with childcare due to late timetabling on his course. HA said that there is a survey going around and if students could be prompted to fill that in we can have more quantitative data around timetabling. HA also said we’re already investigating timetabling as a wider issue. AA said this has been raised but the response was that students knew that lecturing times were agreed by students when they agreed to enrol as this information was available; teaching hours are 9am to 8pm. IR said that this information is also reinforced by his chats on OOT.

**Action: Exec team to investigate timetabling.**

AS raised the issue of the Prayer Room being closes in the SU. HA said that this is covered in her report and advised councillors to read reports before the meeting to avoid duplications.

**5. Lapsing Policies**

Lapsing policies were already voted through in a previous meeting and were dropped from the agenda.

**Motions were brought forward due to time constraints.**

**9. Policy Motions**

NB described the motion and the reasoning behind it around inclusivity and the process being a barrier. AH asked why it was being dropped to one. C&DA explained where the changes came from in the Democracy review in relation to the number of candidates lost due to inaccessible paperwork.

**Council Vote:** 87.5% for, 12.5% against, 0% abstains .

HA explained the reasoning behind the change in election times for faculty reps from Spring to Autumn, emphasising the importance of faculty reps.

JR spoke against the motion on the grounds of 1st year votes being uneducated but agreed with the motion around moving the elections for more exposure for each elected position. AL said that as a first year he feels that the point raised by JR was a little harsh as he should have a stake in the process.

NR said that 3rd years voting for people they aren’t going to represented by could be unfair on 1st years. JR said if that’s a point then why do his role when he couldn’t reap the rewards or vote on who can carry it on.

DB asked if moving the elections would be beneficial for training due to course and faculty reps being trained at the same time. SV&D said this could be factored into training.

**Council vote:** 87.5% for, 0% against, 12.5% abstains.

HA ran through the officer role changes motion explaining the background around perception of titles and the power held by them. HA wants to remove the perceived hierarchy in the officer team.

DB spoke against saying he doesn’t agree the removal of the titles but does agree with the precedent of removing the hierarchy. DB also asked why the changes have come to council before completing the aforementioned democracy review. HB said that there is a staggered approach at the moment so we’re trying changes throughout the review process and also addressed the title issue saying that this is a move to have students engage with what people are standing for, not the title they’re standing for.

DB reiterated he’s not against the sentiment but said that name changes could affect further employment. C&DA explained his experience with being an officer and employment explaining the role is enough without the specific title of Vice President.

Dillen (an attending student) rose that students may not know who to take their issues to with the new title changes. HA said that this is why the move is happening and officers’ titles are just a name and should affect their engagement.

DB asked why we can’t keep the VP titles. HA said that officers hardly refer themselves to themselves as Vice President on OOTs. This is a move to try and remove the potential to be perceived as condescending. HA also thinks it could improve the perception of PT and FT officers.

NR doesn’t disagree but that a lot was proposed that could be seen to be in retaliation to last year. NR proposed an amendment to the motion saying we should increase the power of the president. HB said this would be unwise as the president could lead a dictatorship.

NR stated that she does not believe in dictatorship but that a team does need a leader. JR said that he believes that the playing field should be levelled, and we should take action to ensure that and build communities around it. NR said that she agrees with JR but they should share the same role but there’s a need to have a leader. LS said it’s about equal representation with more descriptive role titles which should make the process simpler for students. There are examples of perceived power in which students approach the wrong officer.

EF left the meeting.

SFa said the title changes wouldn’t affect his approach as he just approaches officers in general. The changes wouldn’t affect that but would give the officer roles a more descriptive title.

DB said that there are far more important changes to happen such as increasing FEHW representation. HA said the other issues with representation are also going to be tackled.

ZM joined the meeting.

C&DA talked about the changes to try and help representatives understand where the changes came from and also gave some examples of other unions whom had had success from the changes. Election turnout for the president was three times that of one of the other officer positions which showed a potential imbalance in the role due to the perception. C&DA also highlighted incidents from another University and their institutions’ perception of the officer roles which proved to be a hindrance.

**Council Vote:** 56.25% for, 43.75% no, 0% abstains.

NR, ZM left the meeting.

**6. Executive officer reports**

The full-time officer reports were discussed and approved. Due to time constraints other reports were taken as read and approved.

**7. Faculty rep reports**

Faculty Rep reports were taken as read and approved.

**8. Council rep reports**

Council Rep reports were taken as read and approved.

**11. Charity of the year**

The Well was voted as the charity after a verbal and electronic vote from Union Council.

**12. National and Regional Activity**

Nothing discussed.

**13. Executive Committee minutes**

Minutes were made available online to officers.

**14. AOB**

DB and GG asked if we can move the meeting to a quieter space for productivity. The meeting has had to combat noise limiting productivity.

75% for, 6% against, 19% abstain.

**15. Chair’s closing remarks**

The chair thanked those for attending.