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Students’ Representative Council

Minutes

Air Bar, 21st of March 2023

Attendance

Audrey Oko (BME), Christine Odaro (General), Andre Costas (Environment and Sustainability), Priya (Learning and Teaching), Eamonn Custance (General), Aaron Fernandez (Employability), Prosper Dzitse (Taught Postgraduate), Victoria Simpson (Mature), Parissa Robinson (SRC Chairperson).

School Presidents

Liam Brown (Business), Clara Seyfried (SHSL), Helena Drylie (Business), Louise Warburton (Life Sciences), Leia Ainscough (Science and Engineering), Dominic Lee (Medicine/ SRC Vice-Chairperson), Sebastian Palma (DJCAD).

Executive

Nyasha (Ash) Mutembwa (President) , Obiozor Okoro (Vice President of Representation), Amarachi Ejim (Vice president of Student Wellbeing).

Guests/Observers

## Cheryl-Ann Cruickshank (CEO), Chris Gourley (Head of Operations – Student Experience), Kellie Ioannou (Business Support Manager and PA to the CEO), Anna Broggi (Business Support Officer), Cameron Irons (Policy and Research Officer), Blair Grubb (Vice-Principal of Education), Keith Winters (Rectors Accessor), Candy Preater (Advice and Support Coordinator), Lucy Barette (Advise and support Officer), Sylwia Slawicka (Advise and support Officer), Alex Roberts (Student Voice Support Officer), Lea Salles (Student Voice Support Officer), Valerya Krumova (Student Voice Support Officer), Zechariah Laari (Student and Former VPA) , Elizabeth Mamah (Student).

## Minute-taker

Loukia Morari (Policy and Research Officer).

Apologies

Bailey Hope (LGBT+), Aishwarya Jayakumar (Women’s), Adarsh Giri Warrier ( 1st Year ), Mavis Whytock (Disabilities), Muhammad Hamza Liaqat (Student Voice Support Officer), Alex Roberts (Student Voice Support Officer), Hasan Mahmood (Vice President of Fundraising), Simone Bairstow (Health Sciences), Keith Winters (Rectors Accessor), Mahh Ashraf (General), Bhuvana Sai Rheddy Komaragunta (Equality, Diversity and Welfare), Jazmine Bennett (Vice President of Community), Zining Li (Vice President of Student Activities), Sai Rakshith Gupta Somisetty (Housing), Ayush Laddha (Dentistry).

Absent

Arshman Rehman Sahito (Facilities), Talha Iqbal Shahid (International), Adarsh Giri Warrier (1st Year).

1. **Chairs Welcome**

1.1 The Chair welcomed the councillors to the sixth SRC meeting and launched ‘Parissa's Praise’- an opportunity to give formal recognition to the expectational work of representatives. She gave recognition to Liam Brown for his efforts on the Students Commerce fair held at the beginning of the month, Prosper for submitting his first motion to the SRC, Alex for his ongoing work on the SRC socials and Elizabeth for joining the meeting to raise her idea submitted on the student voice hub.

1. **Minutes from last meeting – Paper A**

2.1 Proposer: Dominic

Seconder: Eamonn

1. **Action Tracker – Paper B**

3.1 Proposer: Liam

Seconder: Clara

**Discussion**

1. **Governance amendments – Papers C-G**

Governance amendments refers to the updates of the following DUSA documents and procedures:

* Disciplinary Procedure – Paper C
* Bye Law 6: Code of Discipline – Paper D
* Disciplinary guidelines – Paper E
* Code of Conduct – Paper F
* Bye Law 2 Approval - Paper G
* Bye Law 3 Approval – Paper H

4.1 The Chair introduced Chris Gourley to discuss papers C-G on the amendments to Byelaw 2(Paper G),3 (Paper H) and 6 (Papers C-F).

4.2 Chris opened by recognising the year of efforts that went into the proposed amendments with contributions from the previous VPR Sam and Stewart Squire the former democratic support and policy coordinator. He then referred to the previous SRC consultation when the of principals of these amendments were discussed and passed by the SRC. He continued by stating that these are the finalised drafts which will be compiled into one final document (Paper C-F) after the SRC consultation. He then opened for questions.

4.3 Paper E: Clara asked for the expansion of the acronym CS (Customer Safety) within the disciplinary guidelines. Chris clarified that the CS team are dedicated to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of guest within the association and stated that this will be adjusted in the final draft.

4.4 Paper G: The Chair invited the councillors to comment on paper G, the proposed amendments to Byelaw 2. Chris noted that the amendments included two additions and two removals to representative positions; the previously passed representative positions (Trans and Nonbinary rep and Student Parent rep) and the inactive representative positions (Staff rep and Halls rep) respectively. He stated that the Staff rep was originally introduced to bridge the gap between the SRC and DUSA Staff. However, the position has been challenging to fill and was often used to advocate and lobby for student staff within the organisation instead of the use of formal internal processes. He then said that over the last few years management have tried to engage with staff in a proactive manner to ensure that any specific concerns are addressed outwith informal means. Lastly, he stated that the SRC is not a forum for DUSA student staff to raise potential issues or challenges they may be facing throughout the course of their employment but the representative body for the student community.

4.5 Clara then asked to what extent the Student Staff representative had to be employed by DUSA as there are many types of student staff including; PhD Students, library staff, tutoring, and more students with jobs more broadly speaking. Chris stated that this position has been applied to DUSA staff, historically, but recognised the importance of such a broader role considering the current economic climate.

4.6 Dominic stated that he did not necessarily think it had to be a broader student staff role as student staff issues directly link to other rep positions (e.g., housing, employability and wellbeing). Louise raised the issue of accessibility students often face and stated that, potentially, clarification of who to go to if you have problems with your part time job would be more productive. Aaron echoed Dominic’s point that there is crossover between student staff difficulties and believes that the SRC should be promoted more effectively so students know who to go to for help. Sebastian echoed Louises point about accessibility and who to go to. Ash stated that employability rep would be the reasonable point of contact.

4.7 Paper H: Chris introduced this paper; the amendment includes a formal protocol in the event of a tie during elections. Drawing lots, chance or flipping a coin, was the chosen method which is consistent with parliament for a fair and transparent resolution to a tied vote.

4.8 The Chair asked the representatives to vote on each individual paper via the Teams channel. The results were announced by Obiozor as follows:

* Disciplinary Procedure – Paper C (passed – 10 responses; 9 passed and 1 abstention)
* Bye Law 6: Code of Discipline – Paper D (passed – 10 responses; 9 passed and 1 abstention)
* Disciplinary guidelines – Paper E (passed – 10 responses; 9 passed and 1 abstention)
* Code of Conduct – Paper F (passed – 10 responses; 9 passed and 1 abstention)
* Bye Law 2 Approval - Paper G (passed – 11 responses; 6 passed, 3 rejections and 2 abstentions)
* Bye Law 3 Approval – Paper H (passed – 10 responses, 8 passed and 2 abstentions)

1. **Assignments availability - Paper I**

5.1 The Chair introduced Prosper to present this paper as the formal proposer of this motion. Prosper identified challenges that students face due to the delays in assignment availability due to delays in communication from external examiners releasing the assignments. He argued that the University could improve in communication and transparency with external examiners around assignment availability improving student academic experience and staff teaching environments by releasing assignments earlier in the academic year.

5.2 Dominic questioned that if assignments are made available to students sooner would there be a higher quality of academic standard expected and if so, would this benefit students. Prosper then said that the main issue he was focused on is reducing the stress of students and lecturers due to delays in assessments.

5.3 Liam asked which modules he wanted to apply this to and asked how many students have raised the issue with him. Prosper did not have exact numbers but had many student consultations with postgraduate students raising the issue. Amira said that she had many international postgraduate students come to her (as a postgraduate tutor) with questions and concerns around assignment availability and assessment criteria. She then noted that the delays in assessment release have caused stress to both students and lecturers alike.

5.4 Ash suggested that the learning and teaching rep could potentially create a portal so students can voice their concerns formally and use the SRC to advocate for assignment extensions. She then recognised that earlier assignment release would not work for every school, so the learning and teaching rep could be the main point of contact for this issue. Prosper responded by sharing the biggest challenge he has experienced since joining the university, witnessing bureaucratic structures that do not resolve or address issues as expected. He argued that the president's suggestion would take too long, and, in the meantime, assignments would still be delayed.

5.5 The Chair asked the representatives to vote on the motion. The VPR announced the motion passed with 13 responses; 8 passed, 3 rejections and 2 abstentions.

1. **Censure of DUSA Exec – Paper J**

6.1 The Chair reminded Councilors of the SRC values; respect, fairness, democracy and collaboration, leading into paper J. She recognised that the SRC in not working optimally with poor communication between the Executive and the SRC councillors and hopes to bridge that gap as a collective. She then asked Eamonn to present this paper. Eamonn clarified that the purpose of the paper was to change DUSA policy to conform to the motion passed in January [UCU Strikes] and not to criticise any individual personally. He recognised that most of the points had been fulfilled but his main concern was that the Executive has not made an effort formally to support the strikes. He argued that if the Executive is making a conscious effort not to support the strikes, then it is reasonable for the SRC to scrutinise this decision to give the Executive the opportunity to reconsider their position. He raised the potential issue of institutional capture, that the relationship between DUSA and the institution should potentially be evaluated.

6.2 The Chair welcomed representatives and observers to the discussion. Christine raised Hasan’s (VPF) point from the January meeting suggesting that DUSA could not publicly support strikes because it was a registered charity guiding student experience. Eamonn noted that many other Scottish student associations/unions have publicly raised their positions on the strikes and their position as a charity has not affect their ability to do so.

6.3 Andre disagreed with Eamonn and said that he did not think it was the responsibility of the Executive to action motions passed by the SRC once it is raised and evaluated at the board of trustees meeting. He continued by saying that the Executive now have a larger responsibility to action the point raised in the motion since the figures presented in this paper from student consultation show that students are in support of their striking staff.

6.4 Clara noted that a lot of the data from this motion came from the School of Humanities Social Sciences and Law who represent about a third of the student body. Therefore, she argues that the data a is a representative sample. She noted that during the consultation, students asked why they had been given no information from DUSA about the strike action and although the UCU information that was released was incredibly useful, it was released too late. She wanted to raise the importance of enacting motions on time and providing the information to students so they can make an informed opinion on the issue.

6.5 Prosper agreed that DUSA leadership could be more proactive with better communication internally to the SRC and highlighted the importance of putting pressure on the UEG (University Executive Group) to enter discussions with UCEA (University and Colleges Employers Association) to get lecturers back into their classrooms.

6.6 The Chair then clarified the intention of this motion as follows: it urges the Executive to publicly support the strike action with a consideration of the new evidence collected from the student body, to support staff with their desire for better pay and to put pressure on the UEG to enter discussions with UCEA at a local level.

6.7 The Chair then opened the floor to the Executive. Amarachi read directly from the paper *‘This means that the SRC formally and publicly criticises the current executive as a whole.’* Amarachi asked if this statement was relating to the January passed motion.She asked what evidence Eamonn had to imply that the Executive are influenced by the UEG in their decision making. Eamonn clarified that this implication was a risk not a fact and reiterated that institutional capture is potentially an issue worth investigating. He then continued to say that he wrote the motion of censure of the Executive because the motion had been blocked.

6.8 The Chair asked for a show of hands of voting members in support of the UCU strikes, 11 out of 13 representatives agreed and were in support. Obiozor commented that the motion has two aims; to scrutinise the Executive and change DUSA policy. She then reminded the councillors that the scrutiny committee functions to hold both the SRC and the Executive to account and encourages its members to use that channel for more transparent communication. She then said by formally creating a motion of censure this creates a negative impression on the Executive and does not align with the SRC values. Eamonn stated that the scrutiny committee are in favour of this motion and believe it is a fair way to scrutinise the Executive, his intentions are to put pressure on the Executive to action the motion passed by the SRC and argued that the motion is the appropriate channel to do so.

6.9 The Chair introduced Blair to comment on the motion. He stated that the implication of the Executive “pleasing” the UEG is false. Blair stated that he had been in discussion with the President around the issue and she had said that it was under discussion in the SRC. Secondly, he said that discussions are ongoing with UCU and UCEA to come to a decision.

6.10 The Chair introduced Ash to comment on the motion. Firstly, she recognised this is a reasonable means to put pressure on the Executive to action the motion. She continued to state her personal opinion which is in support of the strikes but also considered her position as head of student experience, with this in mind she stated that she is unable to publicly support strikes due to the differences in student opinion. She recognised that communication was poor following the passing of the motion in January. She then said that the motion was reprioritised following the January student intake and housing shortages which she felt was more time sensitive. She wanted to address the compromise that was made with most of the motion actioned (e.g., discussion in court, conversations with the University and internally within DUSA) and asked the councillors to have patience while they work together on resolving the issue. She then welcomed any councillor interested to get in touch to discuss the matter further.

6.11 The Chair asked representatives to vote on the motion. The VPR announced the motion passed - 15 responses; 10 passed and 5 rejections.

1. **Student Voice Hub (SVH)** <https://www.dusa.co.uk/get-involved/student-voice-hub> – DUSA night Bus

7.1 The Chair shared the latest idea on the Student Voice Hub (SVH) by Elizabeth who suggested a DUSA Night bus shelter and asked that if there is an official bus route for this to be publicised so students can get more information and know how to use the service. Elizabeth added that the timing of the bus is ambiguous and has sometimes failed to arrive.

7.2 Chris stated that the service should be running every night and said he would investigate gaps of the delivery of the service and appreciated the feedback. He continued by saying that there is no distinct route as it will takes students to their homes therefore the route is determined by the occupiers. Lastly, he commented on the idea of a shelter and noted that the pick-up point is an emergency access point so this would require ongoing discussion and planning permissions. However, Anna then noted that students are welcome to stand inside the DUSA building and added that they can find out where the bus is from the Customer Safety (CS) team.

7.3 The Chair asked for Elizabeths idea to be added to the action tracker so ongoing discussion could be had to see what improvements can be made to the night bus.

1. ACOB

8.1 The Chair asked for written subcommittee updates to be added to the Teams channel.

8.2 The Chair reminded Councillors about the Celebrating Representation and Community Dinner happening straight after the meeting.