

Student Parliament 3

28.11.2019

Officers in attendance:

Matt Crilly (President), Rachel Cairns (VP Inclusion), John Agbonrofo (VP Welfare), Lewis McDermott (Democracy Convener, Chair of Student Parliament), Savvina Kritharidou (Faculty Rep Business), Sophie Gwynne (Faculty Rep Engineering), Benn Rapson (Faculty Rep HaSS), Chelbi Hillan (Faculty Rep Science), Alfred Amiolemen (Interfaith Rep), Christine Tambe (International Students' Rep), Vinny Williamson (LGBT+ Rep), Brendan Agu (Part-Time Students' Rep), Michael-Sam Vidza (Postgraduate Students' Rep)

Staff in attendance:

Leo Howes, Adam Crawley, Thomas Fairbrother

Apologies received from:

Kayla-Megan Burns (VP Community), Eyram Ahadzie (VP Education), Maddy Watson (VP Sports), Meryam Shuffaq (BAME Rep), Gillyan Cullen (Disabled Students' Rep), Paul Eweka (Mature Students' Rep), Clodagh Halliday (Women's Rep)

1. Welcome

Democracy Convener (DC) welcomes attendees. DC notes that only reps can vote and asks attendees to introduce themselves for the minutes. DC asks to re-arrange agenda, which is agreed

2. Policy Proposal

a) Campus Facility Names

Questions about how voting works at Parliament – DC confirms that the voting system has changed following the referendum which took place in October.

President: Representatives are the ones voting so it should be open. If you have any constituent groups, then people can see how its voting.

DC notes that voting will be open unless

Speech for: Ruairidh Wallace (attendee)

The history of Strathclyde is represented through facility and buildings on campus e.g. Livingstone tower. Most of the buildings are named upper/middle class white males. Did research, only one building (Robertson) named after women. In the future, we should look forward to naming new buildings in a more representative way. There is a new building in development, so it would be best to have someone who isn't a white/middleclass person. Rumours that it may be named after Sir Jim McDonald – this would be a missed opportunity. Not my place to decide, could be handed over to liberation groups and committee – been in touch with staff to ask about this. I think this would be a positive movement to increase representation. When the Union moves, just ensuring that the naming of our facilities are in principle with the idea of representation. This would be a positive move.

DC asks if there are any questions:

Attendee (name not recalled): Think it's a good idea. We need to carefully select names – if choose one that is not representative, it could be a big mistake.

Ruairidh: This would be done by continuous lobbying.

DC moves to a vote.

This policy proposal was unanimously approved

Attendee (name not recalled): Why do attendees not have a vote?

DC explains that this is due to the changes in the democratic structures.

Savinna: If you disagree, this will affect vote.

President: It's been a long process, and there's been issues in the past where individuals pack the room, so moved to a representative body.

DC reminded attendees that they will be invited to submit comments and questions.

b) Kurdish Solidarity Act (2019)

DC notes that this policy was amended by the Executive Committee. DC asks for amended version.

President: The amendments were to remove Student Parliament Believes 4 & 5, which referenced the PKK. The PKK is recognized by the UK Government as a terrorist organization, so sections saying that they are not have been removed.

DC confirmed that the amended version is as read with Student Parliament believes 4 & 5 removed.

President: Had discussion on this in Student Executive. Have long history of standing up for underrepresented groups. Including representing Kurdish refugees – quite a long history of Kurdish solidarity, including collections. More than happy to stand behind Kurdish people on these ones.

Benn: Has Alan (the original proposer) been involved in this?

Matt: He's been involved and is happy with the amendments.

Lewis: Policy was submitted for ratification by the student executive, so this is able to come here.

Attendees asked if we can discuss the policy proposal if the original proposer is not in attendance.

DC: As discussed, there have been changes. Even in line with the old constitution, the seconder is present so it can be discussed.

President noted that the Executive Committee have the authority to pass emergency policy

Benn: I co-wrote the motion with Alan. Unfortunately, the last meeting was not quorate. There is precedent for policy proposals to be discussed even when the proposer is not year.

VP Welfare: At Executive Committee, had discussion with the amendments. There is a structure where there are clubs and societies promoting interests. Proposed that a group should establish a club or society.

President: That was in the executive committee of the 6th November, where there was a discussion but the proposal was ratified by the student executive at the following meeting.

On the back of the comments, this was put back to the original proposer – went back to Exec committee on 13th November. John wasn't in attendance at 2nd meeting.

Benn: As someone who sits on Clubs exec – there's no way for a policy to mandate the existence of club or society.

Alfred: We have difference interests and persuasions. Why are we trying to promote the interest of Kurdish students against the Turkish students? More like we are dividing ourselves – as Turkish students have different interest. As much as possible, stay neutral, should be discussed outside of Union. In my country, there are certain people who have been oppressed – it is almost like we are promoting a “secessionist” group against government.

DC: Could you some this up in a question please?

Alfred: Can we stay neutral on this?

Attendee (name not recalled): As long as I understood – the version I have is not the amended version.

DC apologises for the oversight and confirmed that Believes 4 & 5 are removed.

Attendee: Believes 2 says that this is an act of ethical cleansing. This is a very sensitive issue. There are different areas controlled by different groups. I'm Turkish, so Turkish people at University will be upset by this. We should be sensitive, as we are diverse. When we do things like this, we are losing powers, like if we support Catalans in Spain. Better to create a panel to invite all different groups. This is a good scientific way to discuss. So we could maybe understand – some of us believe that this is current. We have a Turkish society and Greek friends have a Greek society – the news says that we are enemies, but we are not, we are friends. Nobody is promoting Turkish things in the Uni. I don't think it's ethical or equal.

There is something with the Turkish state – I am not supporting fully as people have different views. 4 million refugees in Turkey, and 300,000 are Kurdish. If this is correct, why are we accepting this? This is just my view and suggestion. UK accepts PKK is a terrorist organization – this is part of the UK law. These are so sensitive. If this motions passes, then we are ignoring my views. If we are promoting equal speech, we would need people from different groups.

DC: Any short questions for this motion

Emil: How does it serve Strathclyde students to discuss this? This is different to different groups.

President: I take points in good faith and appreciate the arguments. The key part to that question is that Union has always taken positions on issues. Quite proud to take positions on international affairs which may be divisive. E.g. anti apartheid policy and we have a room named after Mandela. Proud that Strathclyde students play a part in that. Perhaps there would had been some South African students who disagreed. However, students as a body take proactive stances on issues. E.g. taking issues on Palestinian issues. Hope in 50 years' time when there may be peace in Palestine, students can look back on this. It's true that this is divisive – we need to take stances on things that aren't just studies.

Savinna: Would like to say that there is some support. Would like to note that one of Student Parliament resolves (flying flag outside the Union) nice as an idea but how do we implement

this. Some people may not be comfortable with that. Many students are going to wonder why – so maybe this could be just for a day instead of all year round.

President: These were part of the suggestions. I would be happy enough with that e.g. paintings.

DC notes that we are short on time.

Benn: Clarifying that this policy is update on current policy. This is quite out of date and it's been renewed by Parliament at times of lasting policy. Just wanted to update with current information – got put in touch with Alan which is why he became proposer. Want to stress that Alan is very passionate about this – this is quite painful for Kurdish people when flags get torn down, so having permanent flag would be supportive. Some students may not understand this. As for the point of this being divisive, all students issues are divisive. Even if this doesn't pass, there is still policy.

DC noted that photography or filming is not allowed, as consent is not given. The minutes are very detailed so this will be circulated. Will take brief comment.

Attendee: My concern, can we remove parts. Amendments have to be submitted before the part – we updated some parts.

DC: For any amendments to be considered, they needed to be submitted in advance of the meeting.

Attendee: I knew around 100 Turkish students studying at Strathclyde. Don't forget they will be upset – we are trying to make something with good relations. Raising a flag might be good – why don't we do a campaign about Turkish refugees. Last thing, people can establish a society, totally agree with this idea. Our society ran and closed one year because there wasn't demand. When you pass this, it could stay forever.

President: Taken stance on issues before – sometimes have to take decision where some people may not be happy with. This goes in the tradition of solidarity which we've done for decades and happy to continue support.

DC: Move to vote. Would like to remind everyone of the comments made today and the discussions made. Not voting for ourselves but voting on behalf of constituencies.

Savinna: Could we suggest a closed vote.

Lewis: Yes, happy to approve. Brendan to send vote via Skype. Reordering the agenda, discussing Mind Your Own Business next as some members need to leave early. Reps submitted a paper ballot vote to be counted whilst the next discussion took place.

c. Mind Your Own Business

Vinny: He/him, they/them pronouns. Strathclyde has non-binary, trans, and gender non-conforming people on campus. There are a limited number of gender neutral toilets and people experience harassment. Policy to enable students to use any toilet appropriate to them regardless of gender or expression as long as it accommodates to personal needs. Poster campaign around bathrooms to build a culture of sensitivity towards these user groups and spread acceptance of using whatever bathroom is necessary

Chelbi: have one neutral toilet. Should have ones everywhere.

Alfred: Do we have those statistics or is this a claim? Is there data to support this?



Vinny: Don't have hard statistics, as LGBT Rep and Society have done lots of research about this. I believe this is an issue following research.

Attendee: Supportive of motion. Should we do an event to gather information from other points of view?

Vinny: I understand where you're coming from. The reason it's called Mind Your Own Business is that anyone can use these facilities. I don't think that anyone is really bothered with who else uses facilities,

Attendee: We are in a social world, so more discussions may create a bigger impact.

Burhan: As undergraduate, converted the restrooms to all genders restrooms. A number of students were uncomfortable with this situation, and it went back to separate gender restrooms. It's not an issue for me and some people may not like this.

VP Inclusion: Thanks Vinny for proposing. This is a very positive and inclusive Union. There are lots of different things. We already have gender-neutral toilets and people want more so this is not an issue.

DC: Remind that the motion is available to view online. Moving to vote

This Policy Proposal passes with 10 votes in favour.

DC provides an update on Kurdish Solidary Act (2019):

For: 5

Against: 3

Abstentions: 4

This Policy Proposal passes

DC notes that this policy passes as the meeting was quorate. More than half of the votes cast and abstention means that you are not casting a vote.

d. Banning negative marking.

Chelbi: Something that I've experienced. This is where a wrong answer equals a minus mark which can really affect your grades. Have spoken to a lot of people, including staff. Made There is no overall policy. I worked to get this changed and want a policy across the board. No policy banning so if people wanted to do this, then its free to do so.

President: Does anyone know if this is happening in any other departments?

Savinna: This did happen in a business class, in previous years. Part of this is linked to how certain you are with the answers. This may have been changed now.

Chelbi: This is not happening everywhere but could.

No speeches against or comments. DC move to vote:

This Policy Proposal passes unanimously

3) Approval of previous minutes

These minutes are approved.

4) Student Partnership Agreement

President: Everyone has seen these, it's been to Parliament several times. Agreement drafted between Union and University. Didn't support initially – it fell first time and I was indifferent as it could have stifled the Union. Now I think it's a decent document which highlights democratic structures and how university against Union. We are protected in all of our functions, now have enshrined points such as representative bodies. This will be respected. Please vote in favour – would like to move on from.

No questions or comments. DC moves to a vote

The Student Partnership Agreement is approved unanimously.

5) Executive committee minutes.

Don't need approved but if anyone has questions.

Benn: Regarding the referendum concerning the environment, Kayla is not here but spoke to Vice Chancellor about becoming carbon neutral. They said no – what are the next steps?

VP Inclusion: There are further insights.

DC: Could Kayla circulate an update?

President will chase up.

6) Exec accountability:

DC notes that videos are all up now. All on Facebook and will go up on the website. Any questions based on the videos.

President invited Liam, NUS Scotland President to provide an update.

Liam: Try to do this as briefly as possible. NUS are the national representative body of all students in the UK. I represent those in Scotland, interact with the government and national stakeholders. Ensuring that students needs are accommodation via democratic forums, such as one here. For example, bringing things on to National Conference, which informs our policy there.

Recently, been campaigning since the beginning of Scotland Parliament sitting on Widening access, student support (money) and mental health. Sat on committee for widening access – there is now a goal of having 20% of University population representing Widening Access students by 2030, representing socio economic and class diversity. This is important particularly in relation to red brick universities.

Student support – £21 million into students' pockets in this country from this year onwards. A proportion of this goes to care experienced students – they get a grant at the beginning of their time at University. Working with a charity that support estranged students. FMQs – First Minister open to extending care-experienced grant to estranged students as well – this is a success.

Mental health – managed to win, as of last year, £20 million investment over four years in Scotland counselling services in colleges and universities. Has been delivered, first tranche released. This means that this has been distributed. Universities are getting less as there is imbalance in support. Officers will have sight of that money. If not being spent on counselling services, then this will go back to NUS Scotland.

These are the three big issues, active in other areas e.g. GBV in institutions which Emily test, LGBT+ campaign and trans representatives at national evidence submitting evidence on blood board viruses to allow men who have sex with other men to give blood. Active on huge amount of fronts – generally have broad amount of detail. Happy to take questions – feel free to email or add on facebook.

DC: Don't have time for questions at the moment but get in touch with Liam

Liam: All the way through student experience, people have been frustrated about how to get involved with national campaigns. Started action groups on lots of different areas – this is based on lines of officers. This is based on issues that affect students. Housing laundry, PBSAs, climate action and one transports and support etc. If want to get involved, then you can do. If want information, can get so from students unions.

7) Student Parliament Discussion

DC: Student Parliament discussion

Reps introduce each other.

DC: Apologies to Brendan if he has missed anything. Brings to Student Parliament discussion – for non-exec and exec officers to discuss democratic structures. Now is the time to do things differently – try to do something more engaging and fit for purpose. If anyone has any comments thoughts or questions, let us know. Issues include date/time, location of meetings, motions and how they are created, and online access etc. How to have it more publicised.

Non Exec officers receive honorarium, based on them filling out their duties, it is important to have accountability. For example, once every two months have to do a short written report what do you think.

Chelbi: Faculty reps meet once every month so happy to share. Do all representatives get honorariums?

DC confirms that all non-exec receive honorariums but other don't e.g. dept rep. Faculty reps already have a structure – we could do similar thing for those who aren't faculty reps.

Savinna: In what format?

DC: Happy with anything. Paragraph makes sense

President: Each parliament, one of us submits maximum 1 page report in advance.

DC: Happy for a paragraph to a page for accountability.

President: Should exec do that too?

DC: Happy to accept either.

Savinna: Could speech be alternative?

DC: These issues already run on, so this could take up a lot of time. If can't submit a paper copy, then a speech could be accepted. E.g. voice recording. How often?

Benn: Monthly makes sense

DC: This is a lot, what do we think? Is a month okay or once a semester? Any comments on how frequents.

Christine: Twice a semester seems best.

Chelbi: Perhaps may be quiet times.

President: One for each parliament.

Alfred: For me as interfaith rep, I thought that there may be a handover but there isn't. I'm just doing things out of default. There should be a process or system to take things up, so people can see what has been done. Giving feedback is also good, and somebody should be able to keep track.

President: Some roles are new this year – but you're right, there should be a handover for each role. Hopefully will be able to continue.

Liam: Maybe tying handover document to honorarium might work.

President: Worth putting in role remit? Do we all agree that tying a handover process into honorarium is a good idea?

Savinna: would this include just submitting something to Union?

Michael-Sam: Is tying the honorarium to the handover a different point to submitting a report.

Dc: Two separate points, discussing handover.

Benn: If previous years' reports are collected and included as appendix to handover document.

DC notes that no officer present disagree with the suggestion.

DC: What do we want to do for Non exec updates. Once a Parliament? Faculty Reps could use their monthly update as one for parliament.

Christine: Every Parliament is okay.

DC: Between September and October parliaments, there will be fewer actions. Would maybe this be too much.

Chelbi: Can just submit what you have been up to.

President: This could be future looking e.g. seeing what goes ahead.

Michael-Sam: My role is new, been meeting with lots of people. If willing to have Parliamentary report, there will be overlapping reports. Are you going to claim ownership, or would it be sensible that at the end of the semester, you could do a detailed report? Effectively doing your best to ensure that students engage. For non-exec, maybe end of semester report. Or come to parliament and have nothing to say.

DC: Very relevant point, comments

Benn: What might make sense, as faculty reps get paid more, it maybe makes more sense to let Faculty reps do monthly report and then non-exec may need more time to collate reports.

President: What I'm looking for is that I want to know what is going on. Maybe an issue could happen and we want to know what's going on. Every rep has a different constituency and I want to know what they are. This is a good opportunity to note what is happening in different areas. Like idea of end of semester summary – could be a video?

DC: Monthly update for each Parliament is the approach that I would like to take. If it's written or verbal, that's okay, just let me know. This could just be an outline e.g. bullet points and sentence.

Savinna: Concern is whether this would be linked to the honorarium. Some of us need to do it anyway, to show that they get their honorarium. So just keep as an update here just to get support. This may make people anxious. So end of semester may be better

Michael-Sam: As the updates, is it possible that a day or two before Parliament, can we get updates, so the team has a reminders.

DC notes that all officers are happy with submitting reports to each Parliament.

DC: Need to wrap up but have lots to discuss. I would like to meet in the Lounge in January, as it's a change in the room and format. Debates chamber is not a space that's conducive to discussion. Maybe we move and have a roundtable discussion, with galleried seating.

VP Inclusion: Only concern is about accessibility, the chairlift isn't great. Not accessible in here either.

President: Could move the tables round here

Benn: If there's a round table then reps' backs are to the students.

Daniel: But something I noticed, since there is a democracy, there are lots of students who don't vote but want to come and participate. I would like to suggest that a quorum is for these reps, could voting be done by everyone? This may not be good for people who want to come and watch. No longer in their own interest, this may reduce engagement.

DC: Happy to discuss at next meeting, as this is relevant.

Benn: Changed Parliament as they are more of a discussion, things could get heated and tense. Could we look at adopting some kind of conduct policy – there are similar ones in other places. This includes things like not using heated language. This could be beneficial – this is something we could look at.

DC: Benn, you could bring something forward. This could be circulated and brought forward to Parliament.

8) Date of next meeting

Provisionally Tuesday 28th January 17:00 – 19:00, with deadline for papers on Friday 17th. This date doesn't work for everyone, so the team will send out a Doodle Poll.

If there is any policy for NUS, deadline will be to submit things in the January meeting.

Thanks for coming and thanks for patience.

DC closes the meeting