



Student Parliament 6 – 16/04/2020

Chair: Lewis McDermott (Democracy Convenor)

Staff in attendance:

Leo Howes (Head of Student Engagement), Sara Galy (Marketing and Communications)

Officer in attendance:

Benn Rapson (Faculty Rep HaSS), Chelbi Hillan (Faculty Rep Science), Christine Tambe (International Students Rep), Eyram Ahadzie (VP Education), Gillyan Cullen (Disabled Students Rep), Kayla-Megan Burn (VP Community), Lewis McDermott (Democracy Convenor), Maddy Watson (VP Sport), Matt Crilly (President), Michael-Sam Vidza (PG Students' Rep), Paul Eweka (Mature Students' Rep), Savvina Kritharidou (Faculty Rep Business), Sophie Gwynne (Faculty Rep Engineering)

Apologies received from:

Brendan Agu (Part Time Students' Rep), Clodagh Halliday (Womens' Rep), John Agbonrofo (VP Welfare), Rachel Cairns (VP Inclusion), Vinny Williamson (LGBT+ Rep)

Absent:

Alfred Amiolemen (Interfaith Rep), Meryam Shuffaq (BAME Rep)

Students in attendance:

Ru Wallace, Victoria Welsh

Meeting start 17:00 via Zoom call

Lewis McDermott, Democracy Convenor (DC), welcomes everyone to the meeting and moves to the actions.

1) Approval of the previous minutes

Minutes passed with amendments.

Correction of minutes, spell Savvina's name correctly and remove duplication of accreditation.

2) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

3) Executive Questions

No questions submitted.

4) Policy Proposals

a. Halls Representation Act (2020)



Ru Wallace – part of campaign pledge to increase engagement with Halls. Currently a Halls Committee but not directly connected to Student Parliament. Union played a key part in increasing investment in halls to improve conditions, however, lots of international students may not be aware of Union. Suggest creation of new non-Exec member role representing students in halls. This would improve representation and increase engagement with students in halls and private halls. Would connect in directly with VP Welfare and also VP Community. The role would make it easier for students in halls to engage with Union effectively.

Matt – supportive of the proposal, something that Student Parliament has been missing. Benefitted this year from having Michael-Sam who lives in halls and has helped represent relevant issues. Someone has naturally taken a lead within halls. Additional challenge with private student halls. Incoming exec team and Union staff to work out how best to deliver. Natural fits with Uni Halls, need to figure out how to connect with private halls. Overall supportive

DC moves to a vote:

Abstain: 1

Against: 0

Approve: 11

Motion passes.

b. Lecture recordings for all

Chelbi – everyone has seen transition to online learning, perfect time to integrate into University teaching. Helpful for students to revise particularly helpful for student parents, carers etc. Empower people with knowledge instead of creating barriers. Help students go back, cover up any patchy areas of notes. Rely on online learning, easier transition if we'd been using this tool already. Reps to go out and speak to students and departments to see how they feel about it. Seeking funding to support this. Given steer that it might need to be a slower approach to take vulnerable students into account. Think it's something that we could start installing in buildings.

DC – no further questions.

Matt – fully support the motions and the intentions behind the motion. Under instructs section we could add a point that the reason topic moves so slowly is conflict between staff trade union and the university. Trade unions concerned that staff have a role like making physical posters then suddenly asked to post all posters online – may feel loss of ownership of work. Examples of Edinburgh Uni – lecturers retain ownership of intellectual property. Investigate buy in from local trade unions and using a similar model to Edinburgh.

Chelbi – spoke to University senior staff – not sure about all considerations, lecturers being recorded and posted online. Chelbi will be invited into the next University discussion on this.

DC – if motion passes, pass motion then resubmit same policy next time with amendment to supersede this.

Vote

Abstain – 1

Against – 0

Approve – 11

Motion Passes.

Savvina – has there been any research on attendance?

Chelbi – attendance went down but student satisfaction increased.

c. Sustainable Futures

Kayla – replace current lapsing policy Fairtrade Futures. Fairtrade policy across the Union, getting official status and encouraging across the Uni. Taking same priorities and widening this – broad variety of options, local, fair-trade, organic, sustainable impact (environmental and social).

Vote

Abstain – 1

Against – 0

Approve – 11

Motion passes.

d. Opening the Borders of Education

Eyram (speaking on behalf of Rachel) – policy meant to lapse this year, funding for refugees and asylum seekers. Funding already in place, Rachel sits on the board of this in her role. Wish to retain policy to lobby for additional funds as these are currently limited.

Vote:

Against – 0

Abstain – 1

Approve – 11

Motion passes.

e. Strath Union Cares

Kayla – taken from lapsing policy, previous policy USSA supporting Who Cares Scotland. Taken this and broadened the policy out, not personally one of these students. Got input from Sofia Khan, Access and Participation Coordinator, for expert input. Broadened policy to benefit as many students as possible.

Savvina – could you explain a bit more to help grasp the policy completely.

Kayla – whole idea to listen to care experienced students to better support their needs. Part of our role as the Union, want to grow the current care experienced society. Previous policy only focussed on developing relationship with Who Cares Scotland. Wanted to retain this link with this external charity to support this area of work.



Chelbi – speak further in favour. ~50% of young people in Glasgow care units have self-harmed. Care experienced students are 8 times more likely to be excluded from school. Only 35% of CE students leave school with 1 qualification above level 5. CE students have a 50/50 chance of becoming homeless. Support of care experienced students at Strathclyde is increasing but not the time to take the foot off the gas.

Kayla – thanks to Chelbi for stats, didn't know as much detail before looking into the policy.

Vote:

Abstain – 1

Against – 0

Approve – 11

Motion passes.

5) Lapsing Policy

Education Provision in Public Hands, for Public Good Opposing Privatisation and Supporting our Lecturers

Benn – wish to bring forward a new motion next semester to replace the outdated sections but believe it's important to retain current aspects of the policy, such as the marketisation of education, until we can do this.

Vote:

Abstain – 2

Against – 0

Approve – 9

Motion passes.

Free Periods

Chelbi – planning to come back with a revised policy instead. Good to pass now although most criteria met. Can vote to retain until amended or let it lapse until we have a new policy.

Vote:

Abstain – 2

Against – 0

Approve – 9

Motion passes.

Bringing attention to detention centres

Benn – another policy to be kept until it can be updated. Plan to keep the intention of the policy until it can be updated with current facts next semester.

Vote:



Motion passes by consensus.

Campus Wide Nestlé Ban

Benn – Nestlé is a bad company with a terrible ethical track record. We should not sell any Nestlé products within Strath Union.

Savvina – the policy should include a list of companies with better social responsibility.

Benn – agree.

Matt – this our longest standing current policy, carried forward since 1980s. Since I first joined the Association people talked about having the Nestle ban. It's a longstanding policy and good to keep on the books.

Paul – Nestle has so far improved their policies. I will propose a new research study be carried out.

DC – suggest move forward with vote.

Motion passes by consensus.

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

Matt – this policy is about standing up for Palestinian rights. The President of the largest student union in Palestine has been arrested twice, last time when military stormed the campus with guns to arrest him. Policy and BDS more broadly is about breach of international law. Boycotts not about boycotting a granny in Tel Aviv, more about boycotting companies such as those who supply military arms used in bombing. Important policy in the history of Strath Union, we're fortunate here we don't have to pass through check points and show ID to attend lectures etc.

Vote:

Motion passes by consensus

Summertime Blues Student Counselling Provision

Chelbi – contacted Counselling but they are on a break for 2 weeks. Counselling provides a lifeline for students, particularly over the summer. Counselling required during this time. Plan to come back with an updated policy however important to retain to show University that counselling over the summer is vital.

Sophie - anecdotally: I was told support would continue over the summer if I wanted it to.

Matt – worth keeping this on the policy book until something new can be submitted.

Motion passes by consensus

Smoke Free Outdoor Space on Campus

Sophie – resolves should not state 2015/16 but everything else stands. Just need that one date changed.

Matt – don't know if I support this or not. Not passionate about this but not personally a smoker. It's an outdated policy. Most annoying part of smoking on campus is those standing outside library. Much



better if they smoked in open space at Rottenrow Gardens. Fundamentally smoking is bad so not going to oppose the policy.

Kayla – similar boat to Matt, not a smoker but second hand smoke does get to me. Areas like outside James Weir is hard to get away from second hand smoke. Feel it's important to retain commitment to smoke free campus, particularly for those with respiratory difficulties.

Matt – think that's fair.

Sophie – understand what you mean about James Weir, hard to get in. Currently doesn't provide people with a place to smoke. This might give people an option of going somewhere to smoke. Making areas smoke free might help encourage people to give up smoking.

Ru – as a Union we have commitment to student welfare, however, not sure if forcing people to go out in the cold instead of providing them with a shelter is ideal. Very addictive and hard to give up.

Matt – agree with Ru's comments, would perhaps vote against this. Library keen to work with us to get students to stop smoking right outside that building. Potential solution for small designated smoking areas around campus out of pathways for students around campus. Don't really know on this issue.

Maddy – got to consider social expectations around smoking. Governments took this into account when banning smoking. Changes societal ideas around with is socially acceptable thing to do. Could potentially cut down numbers of smokers on campus. Could be best being out of people's eye line.

Matt – public discussion about this could be helpful. Could be useful to get an informal indication from the student body. Potentially a student poll on Facebook and discuss at next Parliament. Lots of disruption at the moment, so this might not be the best timing to put this out. Maybe a Facebook poll is something for the next team to take forward. Continue working towards smoke free buildings.

Benn – not sure about how feeling. Not sure if motion is talking about small smoke free areas at building doorways rather than the entire campus. Think it should go to a vote.

Sophie – recognise what has been said, think it's still worth retaining the policy. We shouldn't encourage smoking on campus, currently smokers outside the entrance to the Union building. Something we need to work on.

Vote:

Approve 5

Against 4

Abstain 2

Motion passes.

6) COVID-19 Discussion:

Kayla - At Exec meeting felt it's important to chat with students and get feedback on the current situation. Goal for the session to check in and gather feedback.

Chelbi – working with StrathReps project board and faculty rep. Working to move away from Facebook – initially receiving lots of messages that way. StrathReps looking at reforming and integrating messaging within the app to help move away from Facebook as main point of contact.

DC – open discussion, come in as you want.

Matt – thousands of messages from students. Stuck indoors receiving messages from students on all channels which was hard to keep up with. Things have since quietened down. Union encourages officers to create work specific accounts so that officers can check in and out. Initially disagreed with this as it can be artificial. However, changed opinion now as it was really difficult to manage this during the initial phases of the pandemic. Recommend work accounts for all officers including non-exec officers. Strath Reps project will be important to resolving this in future. Part of the issue at Strathclyde was that the University hadn't invested in any of these resources to support students so things fell to student officers to pick this up. Lecturers also handling lots of student enquiries. Recommend all officers to make Union social media accounts.

Kayla – accounts made for us by Union including passwords and email accounts. Have set accounts which can be handed down year to year between officers. Can be hard to create new accounts year to year. Can feel a bit impersonal to get an account handed down but could be a good solution.

Savvina – students engaging with whatever website or channels we have set up.

Maddy – agree with option to hand accounts down from year to continue following and representation of student voice on social media.

Matt – on passing down of accounts. Lots of student unions across the UK do this. Can appear odd when flicking through profile photos. Students are transitory so it's not the worst thing that new accounts are created each year. Already maxed out personal account friends, wouldn't be possible to add new students (first years etc). Handing over of accounts contravenes Facebook's rules so may lead to accounts being closed down. Not the worst thing for officers to craft their own account. Max of 5000 friends so potentially need to delete everyone then start adding again. Separation of accounts is important, as is personalisation to ensure these feel real and natural.

Savvina – solution could be pages on Facebook, will give access over to Victoria. Can put up pictures of managing the pages. Can still ensure personalisation but no maxing out of friends and can then be passed over.

Benn – transitioned election page into rep page. Can work but wouldn't recommend. Posts don't necessarily make it to followers' feeds. More likely to be received from personal account. Personal experience, stuff on personal pages was getting a lot more hits than things on profile pages. Maintain good work life balance.

Sophie – Strath Union could post links to all new officer pages to help these pick up follows from people who are interested. Help support this transition.

Ru – would like to thank everyone involved in response to pandemic. University communication hasn't been great. Testament to our representation system what is happening with courses, assessments etc. has been communicated. Made the best of a tricky situation. Union has made this a lot easier than it could have been and wanted to say thanks.

Benn – Officers who asked questions of Jim at Senate. Going into role in June, might be out of lockdown by then but could be back on lockdown. Discussion worth having over next few weeks about University response should this happen again. What happens in freshers' week or semester 1. How to cope with

introducing new students in that situation. Shown to not be great making pressure decisions in a crisis situation so this needs consideration.

Sophie – receiving contact from potential students – is it worth applying if the University is potentially not going to be open. Needs sorting.

Matt – at start University poor at engaging with Reps. Faculty reps had potentially better experience than Exec. Library shouldn't have been closed without at least some discussion with student reps. University centralised power and decision making to people in non-student facing roles. Detachment from what is going on led to worrying disconnect from staff and students. When first came into role, given doc about how to work in partnership with the Uni. Condescending document, would challenge the patronising ethos within this, however, partnership is a priority. This wasn't evident in initial responses to the crisis. Not expecting to be involved in every decision, however, real lack of any communication and engagement. Tone deaf messaging such as "business as usual". Face to face teaching was cancelled on a Sunday afternoon. Lessons to be learnt and structural problems have been flagged. Key things to work out – no-detriment policy (special mention to Kayla for her work on this policy). Understanding it would apply to students on all courses. When it came to implementation, departments indicated it wouldn't apply to a variety of students/situations. Distrust after cancellation of exams then reverse of this decision in some instances. Didn't originally appreciate how many courses are professionally accredited. Uni needs to have more answers ready when communicating to give correct info to students. Key thing for reps to ensure they and the Union's role is valued moving forward. Potential financial crisis on the horizon. Lack of government investment, made up from international student fees. However, unlikely to achieve anything near the targets. Potential financial crisis pending, tumultuous period ahead. Student voice is key.

Sophie – every department doing something different. Can anything be done to try and get concrete response on what is happening?

Matt – need clarification from Uni centrally, however, likely to be reluctant. Feeling at top of Uni that onus is on departments. Lecturers and tutors feel the responsibility is on senior staff to make these decisions. Targeting achieving central decisions so these can be cascaded. When Uni senior staff are back we will seek clarity on these policies.

Ru – indicated that it's unlikely we'll be back in by September.

Matt – no this is only my hunch. Will be governed by what happens and will consult with students effectively. Different institutions are posing different suggestions and preparations for alternative methods of delivery. Potential to plan for online delivery then face to face is a bonus if this is possible. Don't think it's likely we will see distance remote study. Might mean no freshers' week, potential challenges around funding and income. As discussions happen we will feed back.

Christine –bring to light for international students. Uni hasn't indicated what will happen for tier 4 students who are absent for 60 days. Unclear what will happen for students where this situation is out with their control. Looking for Strathclyde to clarify position on this. Also student extensions – will students be required to pay extension fees? What support will be available (stipends etc)? What about students not funded?



Matt – really important questions which Exec will carry forward. Will try and get clarification within the next week or so.

Sophie – document sent to Engineering students

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International/Documents/Letter%20from%20Minister%20Donelan%20to%20International%20Students%20090420.pdf>

Michael-Sam – listening to discussions, have been engaging with PG students many of which have gone home. Would like to share findings. Covid-19 hardship fund, the form is hard to access and add information to. Doesn't allow checklists. Challenging for students who are not so adept at using editing software. Could be improved to make it easier for students to apply for this. Students still in halls – some students are working and paying rent. Students in halls are still expected to pay rent but would like Exec to look into stopping rents. Aware of complaint regarding departments not clarifying what is happening with cancellation of some exams.

Matt – thanks to Michael-Sam for gathering info. On halls – after petition, we have been speaking with Uni senior staff. Some positive news coming, still work to be done but good progress. Halls likely to provide info in the next few days addressing halls rents. The hardship form is outdated and something not personally considered before. The form requires a lot of info which can be onerous and could be improved to make this easier.

M-S – clarity on rent, will this be communicated soon? Assurances would be useful to calm students.

Matt – likely to receive update soon. Aware that number of students in Halls is relatively low and that there are some students who haven't paid March's rent and may not be able to afford April's rent either.

Benn – statement might lead to confusion for students and backtracking from University. Potential financial impact of cancelling freshers' week. Union having skeleton staff has been referenced a number of times, would like clarity on this.

Matt – when lockdown was announced and bars closed, student staff received payments of the average number of hours worked in the previous month which was above the contracted number of hours. Skeleton staffing was a decision taken by senior Union management team. Executive team somewhat blindsided. Union staff who are furloughed are being paid at 100%. Staff from each department are in place to handle enquiries. Level of enquiries have reduced. In Union's best interest to accept financial help from Government to help during this crisis.

Benn – what about students with jobs on campus. Has University put them on furlough?

Matt – don't actually know the answer, might do some digging to find out more info. Some student technicians have requested to be furloughed due to reductions in hours with the campus being closed.

Savvina – Was working at library, was told would be paid for all remaining hours due to be worked. Contract due to finish on 3rd of April. Was asking about safety concerns prior to closure. Was told wouldn't need to come back in and would be paid remaining hours.



Matt – Todd’s bar might be the same. Most student staff contracts come to an end in mid-April.
Will do some digging on this.

Benn – Nourish and Todd’s have sometimes used contracts guaranteeing a certain number of hours to be worked.

Matt – will investigate further.

7) AOCB:

Savvina – ask about TEAs, can students still nominate? Lots of work being done in the background; can staff nominate colleagues?

Eyram – TEAs is for students to nominate staff, nominations are now closed and proceeding with what we have.

DC thanks everyone for attending and brings the meeting to a close.