Freshers Student Parliament Minutes

Monday 20th September, 14:00

Mandela Auditorium & Online

Chair: Kyle McGettigan (Democracy Convenor)

Officers in attendance: Benn Rapson (President), Nesha Malone (VP Inclusion), Savvina Kritharidou (VP Education), Lewis McDermott (VP Welfare), Kirsty Bannatyne (VP Sport), Ru Wallace (VP Community, Arran Lamont (Faculty Rep Business UG), Charlie Wilson (Faculty Rep Engineering UG), Louise Nicolson (Faculty Rep HaSS PGT), Ailidh Hamilton (LGBT+ Rep), Aspen Lynch (Disabled Students' Rep), Callum Barclay (Faculty Rep Science UG), Sean Jamieson (Part-Time Students Rep), Eva Curran (Women's Rep)

Apologies received: Liam Mosson (Faculty Rep Hass UG)

Officers not in attendance: Ashwet Malvanker (Faculty Rep Engineering PGT), Iman Chaudry (Faculty Rep Science PGT), Abdullah Nadeem (Interfaith Rep), International Students' Rep (Zhun Tang), Dorothea Hinrichs (PG Rep)

Students in attendance: Mohammad Baig, Zoe MacPherson, Abdul Eneser, Ezra Wilson

Staff support: Leo Howes (Head of Student Engagement), Adam Crawley (Policy & Campaigns Co-ordinator)

Note: There were some technical difficulties with the Zoom call for online attendees. These will be addressed for future meetings.

1) **Welcome and code of conduct**

Kyle welcomes attendees and introduces code of conduct

2) **Approval and noting of previous minutes**
    a. a. Student Parliament Minutes – 23rd March 2021
    b. b. Exec Committee Minutes – March to September

Kyle asked for comments on minutes. None were received, and the Student Parliament minutes were approved.

3) **Exec Plan of Work**

Each member of the executive introduce themselves. Benn explains that their manifestos overlap and they've pulled together their team objectives. There are below.

1) *Welcome to the New Union*

Got the building open, had a cracking freshers. Had some feedback, which we will work on. Great to see students in the building and having a good atmosphere.

2) *Learning*

Modern learning, which includes pursuing revision recordings for each class, lecture recordings for people who could not attend, looking at examination policies.

3) *Housing*

Housing is an area of focus – pushing university to do as much as they can. University are looking to develop further accommodation plans, which officers will influence. Look to resolve immediate issues around housing – already established some work with the Uni. We're looking to run a piece of research to identify housing needs to have a policy to publish to ensure that students get what they want from housing and lobby the university.

Looking to explore more around commuting students. Becoming more of an issues with people living out of Glasgow city centre. Also considering Union owned housing.

Callum: How many students are being affected by the current housing situation – quite a few people can't physically find a flat.

Lewis: University has the best number but has asked for confirmed numbers. Currently estimating people who have been in touch around housing, in excess of 100. Looking to get firmer figures by close of play today – happy to send them over.

4) Decolonise

Breaking down colonial ideas about learning and how campus works. Includes evaluating what we're currently doing. Looking to decolonise catering to have more diverse food options. Making sure that there are diverse atmosphere around campus so people feel at home. Trying to get scholarships sorted – looking to tackle English courses that extorts international students, going to challenge uni on why they have these providers on campus.

5) Accessibility in Sports

One of our first actions was to secure discounts for students in sport – 10% off if you get a membership during September. The next actions are about participation fund – promoting and securing. Securing free gym passes for give it a go. Looking at free gym passes.

Strath active, have bigger budget so pushing as a free thing. Would love to push sober socials and get more people involved in sports who don't like culture. Looking to improve communication in general – doing a show and a podcast as well as app. Setting up a buddy system for the gym – setting something up, as well as mythbusting.

6) Sexual Health

Looking to create a culture of positive sexual health and wellbeing. Providing top quality resources - looking to establish Sexual Health working group. Lobby external providers to create sexual health clinic on campus – still to move forward but has been positively received.

In process of creating bespoke consent module, looking to improve and make mandatory. Work with disability and wellbeing service to provide information – should have updates for next Parliament. Increasing access to condoms and other products. Looking about providing more information about Sandyford centre e.g. testing kits. Rerunning the sexual health survey in semester 2

7) Creating a Strath Union App

Looking to create a companion app alongside the University app – so we can send push notifications for elections and share deals. Open-minded about development – different ways to do an app. There are off the shelf solutions but exploring developing something bespoke. Another option would be to build an good experience within current app. Keen for all students to get notification come elections

Also looking to create a Strath Sports App. Set up a working group between Strath union and Strathclyde sport. Looking to see what we both want from the app.

8) Campus Catering

Want to make suitable for modern, diverse catering. Nourish not fit for purpose – mostly sandwiches, get something new in. Varied international themed outlets, employing students where possible. Looking to make catering sustainable and transparent, cheaper and affordable

9) Climate Change

Looking to have a bet positive impact on the environment – students should have an understanding and network. Looking for carbon neutrality – decarbonising the curriculum. Making sure curriculum is delivered in line with modern thinking. Making sure climate issues are including

Tackling Greenwashing – organisations present as green but covering up negative impact. Getting a climate/sustainability module – trying to get completed. Quite hard to access and should be mandatory. All attendees welcome to attend Climate Emergency Action Group. Democratic sustainability – getting students more involved in those decisions. Climate assemblies – people who have knowledge and can do good.

Friday is the global climate strike – looking to doing things for that. Hoping to do some banner making and having a good Strathclyde contingent and getting people to climate march.

10) Provide support to different student groups in the organisation

Looking at liberation and other groups e.g. MSA, SUMSA. Looking at new spaces – lost a few spaces moving to the new building. Making sure homes are fit for purpose. Making sure student groups are well housed/

Kyle opens the floor for questions.

Callum: What can students do right now, looking to get something fixed. What can students do in the meantime?

Benn: Go through the residences portal, as then your housing request will be logged. Every student who has gone through that portal has got housing – they will find you some kind of housing. Lewis is continuing to explore all other options – it's a bad situation for all students but we're looking into it.

Lewis: University and Union have webpages for advice in this regard. If you don't get accommodation, you will be logged through the portal so they're doing what they can to get people into housing. Keep safe about housing scams – as some

Zoe: Pushing the University to produce physical student cards – bus tickets won't take app information. Or if your phone isn't working, your phone is stuck. Any Union to push for actual student cards

Nesha: Have pushed for this – looking to provide update.

Charlie: At faculty academic meeting this week, considered options for hybrid learning. If you have an excess commute, you can email to department to get online teaching. This should have been advertised to all the students.

Benn: The University departments don't always communicate with each other – department have different priorities. Savvina will circulate information.

4) Any other business

Benn: Student Exec have been having discussions. Wants to propose that Strath Union should have a referendum on affiliation of NUS. Looking to have extraordinary parliament. Wanting to bring up Parliament at the end. Happy to take questions.

Kyle: Has seen talks from other Unions about this. I don't think any of them have proposed a referendum but other memberships have looked into it. Some people are dissatisfied with NUS conferences – could be a toxic environment

Benn: Has been my experience. It was a 3-day conference that discussed 6 policies. Been a long time since students have had a vote on it. It's something that needs to go to students, not just parliament or trustee board. About whether we want to ask students the question.

Ezra: What would process look like? How can Unions engage students who aren't on campus and making sure merits for each arguments are available?

Benn: Parliament needs to agree to have a referendum – Trustee Board checks the question. The proposal where it currently stands – should be during November. In terms of engaging students – we had our elections entirely online, so would still have large online push and use advertising in the building. Have some advantages in term of engagement. We need 5% quorum in order to be sound.

Kyle: election had 7% elections, would imagine hitting 5% wouldn't be too much of an issue.

Benn: Would still be challenge but would be doable.

Nesha: 5% is the minimum that we need to reach.

Kyle: It is a big decision, the more people you can involve the better.

Ezra: In relation to some of the technical difficulties, and making sure that we're doing things moving forward.

Benn: Going through a software uplink, could use a different software. Getting a physical microphone. Need to make meetings as accessible as possible.

Kyle: Will try to arrange the next meetings for the best time. Would look to put in the evening.

Muhammad: Wanted to see if we can arrange winter relief for some students. Do the Exec know how many disabled students there are? We should talk arranging winter relief fund for disabled students.

Benn: Happy to pick up the discussion to arrange winter relief fund for students.

Kyle will arrange date for an extraordinary Student Parliament meeting and circulate.

Kyle: Want to avoid having too many meetings.

Abdul: Wondering how can people get involved in Students' Union?

Savvina: Programme Reps – if anyone wants to run they can do it through the Strathclyde App, if you are elected, you will take the role. Students can provide feedback through the app but can provide feedback.

Benn: On top of academic representation, there will be elections in Autumn and Spring – we will have elections in November to fill some roles, in general just put yourself forward and then vote. In

terms of getting involved in Parliament, any students can come along and present policy etc. We also have GMs which are open to all students and all people can propose.

Been: Notes that the Exec are looking at our policy book – it's over 100 pages long. A lot of the policy is good but a lot of the language is really out of date. Keen to revise and put in new policies – beef up some areas and overhaul all the policy book and making it accessible. The Union is mandated to do lots of stuff but it's out of date and can't be implemented.

Wanted to flag it here as we want it to be as open as possible – so students know what's going on. Looking to discuss and then get the ball rolling to decide what needs modernised and putting online for feedback.

Abdul: Asks about accessibility. Is there a way that I can give feedback to Union website to push for different university platforms to be more accessible, particularly for visually impaired people. Myplace isn't accessible at the moment. The General Strathclyde app is not accessible either – just wondered what would be your advice?

Nesha: We had software in place, we are looking to reinstate. Looking to make it more accessible in the University.

Muhammad: Thinks that there are applications online on the University disability teams, which can make the software more accessible.

Kyle thanks everyone for attending – looking forward to many more parliament in person. Kyle closes the meeting.