**Minutes**

**Student Parliament 4**

Monday 19 February 2024, 5:00pm

Level 8, Strathclyde Student Union

**Attendance:**

* In person: Eva Curran, President; Justyna Kardasz, VP Community; Charlie Wilson, VP Education; Yu-Chu Doong, VP Inclusion; Molly McHugh, VP Sport; Rachael Okoh, VP Welfare; Muhammad Qaedi Bin Nasir, UG Business Rep; Shayesteh Moghadas, PGR Business Rep; Leng Kuan Yun, PGT Engineering Rep; Wasiu Ogunkoya, PGR Engineering Rep; Molly Biggar, UG HaSS Rep; Chijioke Uzoechi, PGT HaSS Rep; Natalia Blicharska, PGR Science Rep; Pradeep Poduru, BAME Rep; Jo Fitzpatrick, Disabled Students’ Rep; Ishan Babel, International Students’ Rep; Matthew Webb, Mature Students’ Rep
* Online: Johnnie Anderson, PGR HaSS Rep; Maia Peat, LGBT+ Rep; Salma Ghazal, Part-time Students’ Rep; Annie Rose Devereux, Women’s Rep
* Apologies: Tapas Hari, PGT Business Rep; Natalia Koziol, UG Science Rep
* Absent: Kate McMahon, UG Engineering Rep; David Smith, PGT Science Rep; Avinash Ethiraj, Halls Rep
* Staff: Pat Joyce, Policy Officer; Ashanti Magoma, Student Staff (Secretary)

1. **Call to Order**

The Policy Officer welcomed everyone and thanked guests, and then explained how participants could add themselves to speaker lists. Explained the rules that apply as usual regarding method of speaking/addressing one another. Handed over to the speaker.

1. **Approval of Agenda**

*Moved \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , seconded by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that the 19 February 2024 Student Parliament agenda be approved as presented.*

***Motion carried.***

1. **Approval of Minutes**

It is noted in the minutes, that the January minutes be amended, so that the PGR Science rep is changed from the Undergraduate Rep to the PGR Rep.

*Moved \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , seconded by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that the 22 January 2024 Student Parliament minutes be approved as presented.*

***Motion carried.***

1. **Business Arising from the Previous Meeting**
2. **Reports**
3. **President**

The President reports that the walk-a-thon for Medical Aid for Palestine was a success, raising over £6000 and welcomes any questions on this.

1. **Vice-President Community**

Vice-President Community outreaches for support with volunteers for Sustainability Month. They report their time spent recording podcasts to highlight the Exec and volunteering and invites those interested in appearing on the podcast as a guest to get in touch.

1. **Ad hoc committee on plant-based catering**

Without receiving a student indication of wanting to have a 100% plant-based union, the committee concluded that there are other ways to have more sustainable food options in the union. The Union Head of Catering has created a committee of students and staff to make this possible. More information on the discussion and how this conclusion was reached is available on request.

1. **Vice-President Education**

Vice-President Education informs Parliament of the spaces for students open within the Generative AI Expert Working Group, which the VPE also sits on. There are 5 positions open, 1 per faculty from a taught course, and 1 PGR position, with an application deadline of March. The position requires a 3 hours per week commitment, for a minimum living wage payment. The group will focus on topics such as what students need to about AI and clarification about the use of AI in university coursework.

PGR Science Rep asks what the time commitment is for the AI working group. VPE confirms that it is currently for the rest of this semester, with an average 3 hours working time per week.

VPE encourages discussion about the increasing number of student appeals, which has been a popular topic at Quality Assurance and the Assessment Feedback Working Group. They are looking to review the extension guidelines as there are increasing pending long-term appeals due to no main significant evidence being available, as well as 4 times more short-term extension applications, which require no evidence. This is having a negative effect on staff workload.

PGR Business Rep offers that this is because the deadlines set for coursework and exams are too close together and not suitable.

VPE explains that the increase in extensions is having a knock-on effect on the staff ability to mark and return answers.

PGR Science Rep suggests that clearer communication is provided to students on this.

Disability Rep provides that students with long-term conditions or unanticipated conditions may not be able to work to set deadlines and require a few extra days.

VPE reflects that students may not know that long-term conditions can be considered and accounted for in personal circumstances.

1. **Vice-President Inclusion**

Vice President Inclusion has made a lot of progress on their manifesto and is open to answering any questions on this.

1. **Vice-President Sport**

Vice President Sport feeds back the success of the Girls Night In and thanks those at Strathclyde Sports for their efforts.

PGR Science Rep asks if Girls Night In will become a regular event.

VPS comments that a lot of feedback has echoed this, and the PGR Science Rep suggests that it could be worked into a policy, so that it can have a long-term impact.

1. **Vice-President Welfare**
2. **Student Mental Health Agreement (see VPW report)**

VP Welfare reports that the Student Mental Health Agree update is looking to reflect the changing landscape of student mental health. Upcoming sessions will consult on this, and the feedback will be sent to Parliament. All are encouraged to attend.

1. **Other Business**
2. **Privacy & Distinction with Regards to Graduations**

PGR Science Rep raises that at the last Faculty of Science committee meeting, there was discussion about graduate information being recorded and presented, particularly the publishing of this information in a newspaper. The concerns are a privacy issue given that the degree classifications (e.g. distinction) would be published and it may indicate someone’s grades.

VPE has heard similar feedback, specifically about the division by degree classification at graduation ceremonies (e.g. honours, distinction etc). This made some students less likely to attend graduation.

UG HaSS Rep speaks to the importance of recognising students who have earned honours and distinction achievements.

VPW clarifies that grades are not published, and the different grade classifications is what is noted at graduation ceremonies.

PGR Science Rep adds that the main issue was that graduation information was being gathered by an external source.

VPI suggests that students could be given the option to choose whether their degree classification is announced at graduation or not.

VPE adds that graduates are physically split at the ceremonies, and questions whether a compromise could be reached.

PGT HaSS Rep highlights the importance of graduation ceremonies as a celebration, and that the grade one receives shouldn’t affect this spirit.

VPW adds that that they feel that degree categorisations at graduation ceremonies is OK but that this information should not be published in a newspaper.

PGR Science Rep clarifies that only the qualification level is published in the newspaper, which does imply grades and academic performance.

PGT comments that issue appears to be concerning undergraduates more than Masters-level students.

1. **Automated SEAMS Messages**

PGR HaSS rep raises an issue brought forward by a constituent that Strathclyde’s SEAMS system for international students which measures international student engagement for visa purposes has been sending automated messages that come across as imposing or threatening notifying students that they have not been engaging with their programme for visa purposes.

International Students’ Rep (ISR) notes that if there is no activity on the SEAMS system, the notification comes automatically and that international students can send a note to the system administrators in their department to resolve this.

PGR HaSS rep says that the student in question felt they had been engaging and that this may look different for PGR students who may not have lectures.

ISR wonders whether there might be a proactive way to resolve this.

PGR Business rep notes that in the business school, because there is no coursework submitted for the system, international students write monthly engagement reports outlining their engagements with supervisors, teaching, etc and that these reports are submitted to PGR admin staff in the department. If these reports are not submitted to SEAMS by department staff, then automated notifications come via the SEAMS system. She notes that this system is imperfect as there are times when department staff are overloaded, and reports can be missed.

PGR HaSS rep wanted to raise the issue as it is stressful and frustrating for international students and believes reps and departments have a duty of care to better handle this.

VPI mentions that they have previously dealt with this issue as an international student and can understand why a student would feel threatened. They advise that it’s worth communicating with this student about ways to trigger the SEAMS system with ‘engagement’ activity and notes, for example, that signing into a computer at the library can do this. Believes it is worth communicating and comforting the student throughout this process. **(project idea: SEAMS guide for international students?)**

VPW notes that there is an update to the code of practice for PGR students currently going through Senate and believes that this may be addressed in this update. Believes that if engaging with their programme, students should not receive these notifications.

VPE mentions that they sit on the Admissions Management Committee which next meets on 4th March and can bring up the tone of these notifications and suggest more helpful information being sent to students.

The PGR HaSS rep will forward the email they received from their constituent to VPE for information.

1. **PGR Activities**

PGR Business Rep raises the need for more social events for PGR students, especially for January intake students. She calls on the union to put on more PGR-specific events and activities.

The VPE encourages students to contact the Union for support and that the Union is here to help students put on events. He mentions the PGR Wellbeing Society and encourages students to engage with the society and use the Union’s resources to host PGR-specific events.

PGR HaSS rep echoes VPE’s mention of the PGR Wellbeing Society and mentions that the society is hosting a PGR ball on 21 March, which they have been promoting via posters and Twitter. He notes that the society would welcome more input from more PGR students.

VPW mentions that the Student Mental Health Agreement priorities include social inclusion, health and wellbeing, and engagement. She asks all reps to fill out forthcoming surveys and attend forthcoming sessions to support this process.

BAME rep commends PGR Business rep for bringing this up and notes that departments should help with this too.

Democracy Convenor and VPW encourage more PGR and mature student-specific events.

1. **Report on University Ties to Slavery**

VPE highlights the upcoming sessions run by the University about its historic ties to slavery and encourages all to attend.

1. **Annual General Meeting**

VPW encourages a discussion about the possibility of an annual general meeting and what this might look like.

Policy Officer notes that an AGM can be useful for making decisions that warrant direct student input and that without agenda items that may pique student interest, it can be difficult to reach quorum. Explains that an AGM is also useful to get students directly involved with discussion of Union issues, even if this does not involve formal votes.

Mature Students’ rep suggests that the issue raised by the PGR Science rep about publication of student grades could be an area for broader student discussion.

VPW suggests hosting debates following any formal AGM business and that this could be a way to engage societies as well. She mentions that the proposed date of 18 March is not ideal for architecture students.

PGR Science rep suggests that an AGM could be an opportunity for a broad discussion about student funding. VPC highlights Sustainability Month and suggests a discussion about sustainability at the AGM.

VPI suggests that there could be a discussion about the use of personal circumstances.

UG Business Rep mentions the Business department’s Student Voice week and suggests a discussion about how to better gather student feedback.

PGR Science Rep suggests that the Union could seek out ideas from other unions for improving sustainability.PGR Business rep suggests sustainability workshops and education, providing practical skills and education.

President suggests that a broad AGM topic could be accommodation, e.g. Halls rent and the timeline of exams and student move-out dates, which currently sees some students needing to move while still studying.

VPC mentions that the Centre for Sustainable Development is hosting workshops on daily sustainable practices and can provide information for feedback and sharing.

VPW asks whether the dates for the AGM can be moved. Policy Officer confirms that they can.

Democracy Convenor suggests that Council Tax could be discussed. President notes that this is an issue being worked on by the Glasgow Student Forum.

Policy Officer suggests all members of Parliament to send any suggestions for possible AGM topics to him.

1. **Adjournment Democracy Convenor**

*Moved* ***UG HaSS Rep,*** *seconded by* ***President*** *the 19 February 2024 Student Parliament meeting be adjourned.*

***Motion carried.***