

Student Parliament 2
25/10/2022
Offline/Online meeting

Officers in attendance:

Offline:

Arran Lamont (VP Education), Lewis McDermott (VP Welfare), Ronan Welch (VP Sport), Adam Morrow (President), Yu-Chu (Kathy) Doong (VP Inclusion), Justyna Kardasz (VP Community), Vivek Malik (Mature Students' Rep) Molly Biggar (Faculty Rep HaSS UG), Alistair Cooper (Faculty Rep Engineering UG), Hemanth Dhulipalla (Faculty Rep Engineering PGT), Muhammad Qaedi Bin Nasir (Faculty Rep Business UG), Mohammed Gusbi (Faculty Rep Science PGR), Kyle McGettigan (Democracy Convenor).

Online:

Diksha Shandilya (Interfaith Rep), Grace Alom. (Part-time Students' Rep), Ziqing Yin, Shafa Ayaz, Muntaha Naseer (Faculty Rep Science UG), Rebekah Chatelier.

Staff in attendance:

Adam Crawley (Policy & Campaigns Coordinator), Leo Howes (Head of Student Engagement), Amy Baddeley (Representation Coordinator), Maisie Keogh (Student Engagement Support Staff).

Students in attendance:

Massimo Castelli, Kathryn Murdie, Eamonn McClay, Athoof Ahamed.

Apologies: Atif Sattar (Faculty Rep Business PGT), Stutee Karulkar (Faculty Rep Science PGT), Musa Bello (BAME Rep), Swati Choudhary (International Students' Rep), Maia Peat (LGBT+ Rep), Eva Curran (Women's Rep)

1. Welcome and Code of Conduct

Everyone is welcomed by Kyle McGettigan, Democracy Convenor. Kyle explained the items in the agenda and highlighted the Code of Conduct.

2. Approval and note of previous minutes

Approval of minutes are passed from the previous meeting at Student Parliament.

a. Student Parliament Minutes – 27th September 2022

No comments or queries were raised about the last minutes. These were passed.

b. Exec Committee Minutes – September to October

No comments or queries were raised about the last minutes. These were noted.

c. The Student Exec Update

Adam Morrow updated that since last Parliament (September) the Officers had been advancing their executive campaigns at a reasonable pace. Yesterday (24.10.22) they were working on the details of the sexual health awareness campaign which will be taking the form of a SHAG (Sexual Health

Awareness & Guidance) Week in January. In terms of other campaigns, accessible learning has now formed into a working group to focus on lecture capture. Cost of Living is still at the forefront of everybody's mind at Strath Union. The Exec Team are currently working on a guide with the university on cheap eats and how to make your money go a bit further in the union.

d. Education Committee Update

Arran Lamont updated that there has been one meeting of the Education Committee since the last Student Parliament. There has been discussion around the return to campus and lecture recordings. A few of our PGT reps have just come to the end of their term and elections are open. Arran encouraged people to vote in these. He is looking forward to welcoming new members to future meetings. The next meeting of the Education Committee will be Monday 31st of October from 4-5pm.

e. Inclusion Committee Update

Kathy updated that the focus has been on Black History Month (BHM) events. The decision has been taken to change from an in-person speakers event to an online format as a podcast so that listeners can engage at their convenience. Also, with regards to 16 Days of Action, there is work being done around Fight for the Night trying to include women-gendered societies and other institutions. Kathy has also been working on supporting the formation of an Iranian Society at Strath Union and organising a freedom rally.

3. Action Group Updates

a. Housing Action Group

Eamonn highlighted that alongside the VP Welfare, they would be organising a stall in the union (26.10.2022) with the aim of surveying students and finding out what housing problems they have been facing. Eamonn is also working on a launch event for the Housing Action Group so he will also be looking to recruit people potentially from discussions at the stall. He did try to hold a welcome event previously, but this was on a bank holiday and so attendance was low. He will be trying to tie the work in with the Cost-of-Living crisis and organising campaigns so that students can find resources that will help them with housing.

****There were no representatives from the other action groups present so there was an update from VP Community on the Climate Action Groups activities****

b. Climate Action Group

Justyna highlighted that the group were still deciding what to work on this year and that they had not come up with a definitive plan as yet. The group is open to suggestions from students but would like to make divestment from fossil fuels a focus.

4. Lapsing Policy

Kyle updated that there was a lapsing policy working group opportunity for anyone who was keen to be involved. Kyle highlighted that any students wishing to become involved can message at the end of Student Parliament or contact Adam Crawley via email. Alternatively, if no one was keen to be involved then this can be put forward to the next Student Parliament due to be held in November.

5. Individual Officer Updates and Question Time

a. VP Welfare

Lewis discussed that they have been working on items from the manifesto they was elected on. On the matter of housing, they have been working with Adam and the university to see what the university can be doing to assist those students still looking for housing and to see how those on the waiting list can be housed. They are also focusing on housing for the January intake of students. There is also work being done on a local and national level on this matter too which they will discuss later.

In terms of sexual health, working with Adam Morrow, the first meeting was held on the 24th of October and today (25.10.2022) there was a meeting of the Sexual Health Working Group which consists of representatives of both the union and university. The group meets to discuss sexual health initiatives and to ensure the sharing of resources.

On mental health, the Chair/Co-Chairs of the action group were unable to attend Student Parliament, however, there was a successful launch meeting of the Mental Health Action Group. The student mental health agreement process is underway. Lewis will be contacting students to get their input on how mental health provision at Strathclyde can be improved.

In terms of collaboration and student engagement, Lewis is keen to start talking to students more. They have a drop-in on a Thursday but are looking to attend more student events in the coming weeks.

b. VP Sport

Ronan updated that there was a total of 2500 members as of Monday (24.10.2022) which is well ahead of trends from previous years. There was 2500 sign-ups during Freshers week alone for the free sports sessions and this is in part due to the return to campus for students. There has been a focus on volunteer development as highlighted in Ronan's manifesto. He is looking to ensure those who donate their time in the sports union get a good experience and opportunities to develop themselves as individuals.

There has been a focus on the culture of the Sports Union and there has been work with external organisations to ensure there is training so that members are equipped with the tools they need to support each other and create an atmosphere and purpose that everyone is proud of who they are.

Ronan has tabled a piece of policy ensuring that Wednesday afternoons remain free from classes for those who wish to engage in sports. He will continue to work on this throughout the year.

The Captain's Dinner took place on Thursday (20.10.2022) and there are many additional events being held in future weeks such as Spooky Sports, Sober Social on Halloween, Take Me Out, Sports Ball Boot, Halloween Ceilidh, Rugby Varsity for example. A wide diet of events is being held to ensure those who choose to engage in some way with sports have lots of options. Ronan is also working with Strathclyde Sport to ensure that there is a great sporting ecosystem at Strathclyde, so inclusion and accessibility has been a focus.

c. VP Inclusion

Kathy reiterated her earlier remarks on the BHM podcast. Fight for the Night has been pencilled in for the 8th of December, but she is still working to get Glasgow City Council's approval, so this is a provisional date. Kathy is working on collating resources and having stalls available with more information after the march. Kathy has been working to support international students and working with Iranian students to help them form an affiliated society at Strath Union. She is also helping them to organise a freedom rally too.

d. VP Education

Arran updated that earlier today (25.10.2022), Adam, Leo Howes and himself had met with the Vice Deans who were singing the praises of the Faculty Reps. Arran said that he had been focusing on the Education Committee Meetings and accessible learning and he will be speaking with the Deputy Associate Principal in the coming weeks. There has not been too much movement with some of the working groups and it is very much work in progress but there should be meetings held within the next few weeks.

Programme Rep elections have recently taken place with around 350 students appointed so far. In the coming weeks, the Faculty Reps will start meeting with programme reps.

Study spaces have been a hot topic and working with the university, new study spaces have been confirmed in the Graham Hills Building and Livingstone Tower. Working with the Faculty Reps and Maisie Keogh, Arran is looking to develop these into better spaces for students to use. He acknowledges that the Teaching & Learning Building is very busy at the moment.

Arran has also been carrying out some work with the library around retaining some of their external accreditation.

e. VP Community

Justyna updated that the sensory room has been renamed the quiet room. The room has been secured (Connolly Room) and work is being done to secure funding to kit it out with furniture.

Discount cards for societies are on their way.

The inter-soc project was successfully launched in the Societies General Meeting which was part of her manifesto. She is welcoming feedback from students on how this could be improved.

Justyna is also working with the new sustainability coordinator on the sustainability hub and is welcoming further feedback from students on this.

f. President

Adam was in discussion with the university secretary about conducting a space utilisation assessment. All of the Exec Officer's campaigns are progressing at a reasonable pace. Adam has been working with Lewis on the issue of student accommodation. They have recently got in touch with Glasgow City Council but have yet to receive a response. They are now focusing on the January intake of students to ensure that they do not experience the same issues as the September intake.

Regarding the cost of living, the university's catering service has lowered their prices. There will be more initiatives from Strath Union catering with a guide being created for students about cheap eats on campus and how to utilise energy and staying warm. The university is also working on a warm bank which will be a map detailing where the warmest spaces on campus will be.

The library will be opening their 24/7 service two weeks earlier than usual to accommodate students who are impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

Alongside VP Community, they have started to work of divestments from fossil fuels so there will be more to update on that at future meetings.

A personal project Adam is focusing on is visibility and accountability which was part of the manifesto. Adam is keen to have more students understand who the Exec Officers are and what they do.

Executive Officer Question Time

VP Welfare

Qu.1 You and the officers have highlighted that sexual health is an area of focus. When will there be a testing centre on campus for students and, if this is already happening, what other work will you do to support students' sexual health and wellbeing?

Ans. This was a commitment from Lewis from their first election campaign and in terms of getting a sexual health service on campus, the university is open to the idea. However, there is a lot more groundwork needed before a service such as this can become a reality. Lewis highlighted that there needs to be strengthening of relationships with the Sandyford Centre and the Terrance Higgins Trust and other organisations which focus on sexual health. Data is needed on whether students are accessing the existing services and there needs to be more work done around tackling the stigma around sexual health and making sure students feel comfortable having conversations around this topic. This is important as there could be a situation where the university has a sexual health service, but it goes underutilised due to existing stigma. Having the data to justify having a service like this on campus is vital before the union can pitch this idea to the university in a formal manner. So, to recap, the main areas of focus on this are:

- Challenging the stigma
- Having the data to justify the service
- Making sure this is a priority for the university before we have this conversation

When Lewis spoke with the university about this previously, they suggested having a GP on campus which is why the data around sexual health services is important so that the investment can be justified. This is a long-term project and at the end of the year following on from the sexual health campaign, there should be the data available to provide to the university to get this service formally planned.

Qu 2. Housing is clearly a significant issue this year – this has an impact on students staying in university halls, private halls and in the renting sector. What steps are you taking to deal with this at a Glasgow-wide level, not just within the University?

This is not an institutional issue, it is not just happening at Strathclyde or in Glasgow or the UK, it is a global problem. Clearly, a much bigger solution needs to be found and last night (24.10.22), was the

first meeting of the Glasgow Student Forum, a membership organisation of all student unions and student associations in Glasgow (both universities and colleges). One of the key issues which was discussed was campaigning on a local level about housing and accommodation. It has already been discussed that the group is looking to share resources and information, campaign ideas and efforts with each other. It is important to have a united front when going to organisations such as Glasgow City Council and Unite Students as it can be said that we represent 150,000 students and we are unhappy with the current accommodation provisions.

This morning (25.10.22), Lewis met with the Glasgow Economic and Leadership Workstream Committee which comprises of representatives from all higher and further education institutions. They pitched the priority of the Glasgow Student Forum and they were keen to work with them in challenging Glasgow City Council on some of the restrictions they have on housing. This is at an early stage but any students looking to get involved in this should contact them. Lewis also acknowledged Eamonn and the work done by the Housing Action Group.

VP Sport

Qu 1. Physical and mental wellbeing is important for all students and can be particularly important for students studying for a doctorate. What specific initiatives are you leading on to ensure that PGR students can engage fully in sporting opportunities?

Ans. We have a lower than anticipated uptake of PGRs and PGTs. Unfortunately, they don't enjoy the same luxury of Wednesday afternoons off as undergraduates do and Ronan explained that this is going to be a hard fight to overcome. PGRs and PGTs do struggle to engage with the usual Sports Union societies. He also highlighted that he has been speaking with various academics on the matter but unfortunately, they do not believe that the Wednesday afternoon off policy applies to PGTs and PGRs. This is a priority he is working on and he recently tabled a policy at the SEC committee meeting which whilst it did not focus on the PGR/PGT Wednesday afternoon policy, it did state this was an area that needed development. The Sports Union currently has around 2500 members (2000 UG and 500 PGT/PGR) for PGs this is lower than at other universities. Ronan hopes that within the next 5 years PGRs and PGTs will be able to enjoy the luxury of a Wednesday afternoon off to develop themselves whether that is through sport, volunteering etc.

Ronan is working on a system for next year in terms of data gathering so that PGT and PGR students can be distinguished from each other and that way these groups can be targeted more specifically. At the moment though, there are a number of clubs which are very good for PGRs especially if you are working 9-5pm so you can train flexibly around your work such as archery and rowing. Of the 65-70 members around 10-15 are PGRs. Whilst the usual BUCS offering isn't ideal for PGRs at this stage, progress is being made and Ronan welcomed feedback from the PGR community.

Qu 2. 16 Days of Action and Fight for the Night are coming up – what are you doing to encourage sports members and committees to combat gender-based violence both in their clubs and further afield?

This is highly relevant as today (25.10.22), I have been reaching out to every woman-gendered sports club talking about Emily Tests which for those not aware, is a charter which ensures there is no space for gender-based violence in institutions and where there is, it is dealt with, the victims are supported and there is a clear evaluation period to ensure this never happens again. There is a large Sports population engaging with Fight for the Night and we have been working with our male-gendered sports clubs to tackle masculine bias working with a company called Beyond Equality. The

aim is to tackle the 'locker room' mentality and it was a manifesto pledge from Ronan to tackle toxic atmosphere and the stigma associated with some sport.

Regular communications around Wellbeing Wednesdays and Team Tuesdays is continuing and work is being done to ensure the Sports Union is a space where everyone can be themselves and that there is no tolerance for people who don't want to buy into that culture.

To summarise, Ronan's two goals for the year are:

- To ensure there is no room for gender-based violence through the trained bystander policy and that the culture within the Sports Union is being addressed.
- Where there are instances of gender-based violence, making sure the victim is supported and the perpetrator(s) are prosecuted all while ensuring that instances can never happen again.

VP Inclusion

Qu 1. How are you ensuring that more students can feed into the running of key inclusion events, such as Black History Month and LGBT+ History Month, and particularly amplifying the voices of those with lived experience?

Ans. Kathy also received an email from a student with a very similar question. As she was aware that September would be a very busy month, she started planning for BHM in July and as Freshers is also in September, she was aware of the challenge associated with organising events for October. She reiterated that it should not only be the union or university who organise BHM events and welcomes students taking part in this process too. Kathy then highlighted some of the events which are still left in BHM and supports student's attendance and participation in these. There will be an opportunity for students to provide feedback in April about what kind of events and activities they would like to see for the next BHM. This should help in planning events that are more relevant for students.

Kathy is also heavily involved with the LGBT+ society and helped organise the national coming out day event. She highlighted that whether or not you identify with this community you are free to attend. She also reiterated her commitment to various student groups hosting their own events and listed a few of the most recent ones she had attended.

Qu 2. Last year, the Union and University committed to creating a mural on the side of Graham Hills to celebrate Black history. Can you provide an update on where this project is and how students can feed into this further?

Kathy updated those who were not aware of the legacy project that it was initiated by the previous VP Inclusion. There were limited updates to provide but Kathy did highlight that she is working with Estates Services to find a suitable site for the mural as there are talks around the construction work on the building. She is also awaiting feedback on the costing aspect from the union and the artist involved. As soon as she has further updates, she will post these on her social media channels.

VP Education

Qu 1. Students have been promised lecture recordings on several occasions. How can you make this a reality, whilst also recognising the legitimate concerns some teaching staff have around using lecture capture?

Ans. At Strathclyde, as with most institutions, we have two main issues:

- IP rights surrounding who owns the recordings
- Does the institution have the money and facilities to actually do these things?

The answer to both of those questions is no. Arran's first priority has been to dive into IP and he notes that it is something that Edinburgh University do very well, and he has been in contact with his equivalent there around their policy. Arran is continuing the conversation with people at Strathclyde about this and there is some appetite for this from some higher up in the institution. This is not so much a case of the university allowing recordings to replace lectures but as a revision aid.

Arran does believe that there is a case for lecture recordings to be made available to students but that day a long way off. He acknowledges that there is a lot of policy work to be done as well as capital investment from the university to kit out lecture rooms for recordings.

Qu 2. PGR engagement is a key area of focus for the Union – what are you doing specifically to ensure that PGR students have good representation within the University, as well as access to extra-curricular activities such as sports and societies?

Ans. PGR engagement is a priority and a large part of that for Arran is the Education Committee. It is very useful to have our PGR reps there to touch base with so that he can better understand the challenges faced by PGR students. Maisie, a student trustee has been useful in helping to keep the finger on the PGR pulse. In terms of PGR representation, Adam (President) and Arran have been working with the DRG over the past few months to evaluate how the union does PGR representation at a departmental level. There are further announcements about this due soon. The Doctoral School has also invited Arran and Adam along to planned induction events all with the aim of creating more conversations around PGR engagement and getting them more involved in the union.

Study spaces is part of that conversation too and Arran is looking at finding dedicated spaces for PGRs. In terms of involvement in extra-curricular activities, referring back to Ronan's earlier comments about the Wednesday afternoon policy, the union and sports opportunities are not just for undergraduates it is for every student.

VP Community

Qu.1 With such a broad range of societies with different requirements to function, how will you ensure that access to society funding is fair and equitable, based on individual societies' needs?

Ans. The Societies Executive uses a democratic process to make collective decisions and all previous decisions on funding are considered so for example, whether a society has had funding for something previously. We may not prioritise funding in this instance, but it is also weighed by the need of the society at that time.

Qu 2. Sustainability is a key area of focus for the Students' Union – how will you ensure that student feel able to contribute effectively to organising for sustainability, and what steps are you taking to ensure that the University sticks to its target of reaching Net Zero by 2040?

Ans. The Climate Action Group organises events and engages with the student community through things like banner making. The sustainability hub which will be ready soon will provide an opportunity for students to get involved. There are things like the Climate Strike which is happening this Friday (28.10.22).

Justyna works with Sustainable Strathclyde which is one way to keep the university accountable for hitting its target by 2040. She also sits on various committees with other members of the climate action group, so the student voice is heard throughout the whole process.

President

Qu. 1 With the Cost-of-Living crisis looking to be a significant issue over the winter, how are you ensuring that students receive support from the Union and University, and what more will you do to ensure that students are kept warm this winter?

Ans. As we all know, we are in a cost-of-living crisis and students are disproportionately affected by this on so many levels. As I have already mentioned today, we have a lot of community-based initiatives around our food offering, our warm bank initiative which is a shared initiative between the university and the union. We would encourage all students to come and use the university buildings and the union especially, for charging your devices, cooking your lunch here and even showering here if necessary. There are shower facilities in Strath Union on level 1. In terms of moving forward, there is a lobbying effort from myself and the CFO of the university, Stephen Wallace to top up the hardship and discretionary funds so students can access it if they need it. There should be no shame about it. I would encourage you all to join our cost-of-living town hall meeting on Thursday (27.10.2022) at 4:30pm in the Mandela Auditorium where we will hear from students and what kind of struggles, they are going through and what they would like to see. It is a very complication situation, but I encourage everyone to come along, tell your friends and share your stories and ideas.

Qu. 2 UCU have recently announced that their ballot to strike was passed overwhelmingly by their members. What is your position on this?

Ans. I just want to make it clear that we try to be on very good terms with the UCU, but we had very little notice about this ballot. We are yet to come together as a team to discuss a unified approach but will do so in our Executive meeting tomorrow (26.10.2022). What I will say we were elected on a mandate to minimise disruption to students as much as possible, but we still acknowledge the challenges our staff and students are going through. They have our utmost support and sympathy. With this in mind we will be spending the next days and weeks going out into the student community and finding out what they want. We are a student's union, you hired us, you are our bosses. We are here to support what you want.

The Democracy Convenor then opened questions up to those in the room and on Zoom.

VP Sport put a question to the Executive Officers: *"What's one thing you think in reflection, could have gone better this year?"*

VP Sport answered:

"There were a few days at the start of the year due to the rush, we weren't as prepared and one example of this is Women in Sport Week. We had some tokenistic stuff ready like social media posts, but we wanted to be really present in that week in terms of offering things like sports bra fittings and women-only sessions. We just didn't have the time or the logistics to put that together properly and only really had token gestures so that is something I would personally like to improve on.

VP Education answered:

“With the nature of the Strath Reps App I think there is always going to be problems, but we got there in the end. When it comes to representation, we have a lot of work to do but in the end, it was a great success.

VP Welfare answered:

“I am spending way too much time talking to middle aged white people on levels 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 and I am not spending anywhere near as much time talking to students. That is a failing on my part as I haven’t made this a priority. I have been so bogged down in committee meetings and university business and that is not why students elected me. I am actively trying to better engage with students and be part of the community which I was elected from.”

President answered:

“I would like to see better visibility of the Executive Officers and more awareness about how democracy works. I would also like to see how the students can improve the democracy offering at Strathclyde Students’ Union which will be invaluable”.

At this point Hemanth raised a point about housing mentioning it being difficult to secure accommodation without a job or a guarantor.

VP Welfare responded to this question and acknowledged that international students could only work a certain number of hours according to their visa status and that sometimes the only way they can afford housing is by getting a part-time or second job. They also don’t have access to the same kind of financial support from the Scottish Government and from Strathclyde. It is a lot of bureaucracy and it takes a lot to unpick. We are lucky in that our discretionary fund is open to international students. This money comes from SAAS and is given to the university to distribute to students. Usually, it isn’t open to international students but in light of COVID, they opened it up to international students last year. They have done the same thing this year and I would encourage students to reach out to the Advice Hub for information and support. The second part of your question was about guarantors and I can update that the university is currently in the process of trialling a guarantor scheme where the university acts as a guarantor for certain groups of students. This is currently being trialled with care experienced students and so far, it is going successfully. In light of the housing crisis, it is going to be one of the conversations we will be having with the university moving forward to see if this can be made available more widely as a policy for students.

Hemanth then clarified the first part of his question and how it relates to landlords prioritising housing to those who hold a job.

VP Welfare responded by saying that it is something that can be lobbied, and it did come up in discussions with the GSS last night (24.10.2022). It is part of the national conversation we are having with the Scottish Government and we can look into tightening up this legislation. Your testimony and the testimony of the students being affected would be beneficial and we will be putting a call out for information at that stage and I would love to hear from you then.

The conversation then returned to the VPs answering VP Sport’s original question “*What’s one thing you think in reflection, could have gone better this year?*”

VP Community answered “Me sitting in my office with my laptop staring blankly out is not going to make students come to me. I need to meet them on their own terms and go out into the student community.”

VP Inclusion answered, “I would say I need more staff support such as a campaign coordinator and have them on the team and stronger staff support for next year as a lot of the role involves discussion between individuals.”

7. Any other business

The Democracy Convenor asked if there was any other business. VP Sport asked if they would be receiving questions from students at each student parliament adding it would be good to make it a regular fixture and good from an accountability perspective. The Democracy Convenor agreed and suggested there be one question per VP at each parliament, VP Sport concurred.

The Democracy Convenor asked for any final questions from those attending on Zoom.

Hemanth added that this was his last parliament meeting as a rep as he is leaving the role and thank everyone for the opportunity. VP Sport led the group in a round of applause.

There was no other business. The Chair thanks attendees for coming and ends the meeting.