

Student Parliament 4 - Minutes

Tuesday 24th January 2022, 17:00

Online & L8 Open Space

Note: some sections of the Zoom recording, which are used for the minutes, were muffled

Officers in Attendance:

Adam Morrow (President), Justyna Kardasz (VP Community), Arran Lamont (VP Education), Yu-Chu (Kathy) Doong (VP Inclusion), Ronan Welch (VP Sport), Muhammad Qaedi Bin Nasir (Faculty Rep Business UG), Devjyoti Badal Das (Faculty Rep Engineering PGT), Alistair Cooper (Faculty Rep Engineering UG), Chisom Sheryl Okpala (Faculty Rep HaSS PGT), Molly Biggar (Faculty Rep HaSS UG), Mohammed Gusbi (Faculty Rep Science UG), Muntaha Naseer (Faculty Rep - Science UG), Musa Bello (BAME Rep), Kyle McGettigan (Democracy Convenor & Chair), Ari Hamilton (Disabled Students' Rep), Vaisakh Constantine Francis (Halls Rep), Diksha Shandilya (Interfaith Rep), Maia Peat (LGBT+ Rep), Grace Alom (Part-Time Students' Rep), Eva Curran (Women's Rep)

Apologies from officers:

Lewis McDermott (VP Welfare), Danielle Araujo (Faculty Rep Business PGT), Rebekah Chatellier (Faculty Rep HaSS PGR), Dijemi Oladepo (Faculty Rep Science PGT)

Officers absent:

Ziqing (Lily) Yin (Faculty Rep Engineering PGR)

Staff Support:

Adam Crawley (Voice Manager), Maisie Keogh (Student Staff), Natalie Bello (Student Staff)

Students also in attendance

DC welcomes everyone to the event and reminds everyone about the code of conduct. DC asks about previous minutes and any issues. Molly Biggar lets us know her name was spelled incorrectly; this is noted for change.

1. **Executive Team Update** provided by President Adam Morrow.

Sexual Health and Guidance (SHAG) week went very well with Strath Union-branded condoms available. The team were raising awareness for a petition which was led by VP Welfare Lewis McDermott who was making the Scottish Government and local councils aware of the lack of testing services available at Sandyford and in Glasgow. Workshops were led by Strath Union staff with a focus on removing the stigma around testing and to start a mature and open conversation around STIs.

Following on from the last Student Parliament, there have been discussions around the action of the university and the announcement of industrial action by the UCU and the 18 days of strike. Adam commented that he will wait to speak more on this later as this is a separate item in the agenda. However, he was pleased to say that following discussions with students, the team will be escalating actions in support of the UCU. This shows progress in this area and the team are calling for universities and colleges at the national level to come round the table and resolve the issues there.

2. Lapsing policy

DC opens by making everyone aware that those who can vote will be voting on these lapsing policies as a block. DC offers the opportunity for anyone to speak on any of the lapsing policies.

VP Sport Ronan Welch raises issues with the 'Military Recruitment' policy and banning of certain events related to branches of the military such as OTC and Air Cadets. Ronan asks for an amendment to this. Jay highlighted that this has the potential to encourage sectarianism and this will impact working class students disproportionately. Ronan clarifies his stance about military recruiters not being welcome on campus but not necessarily other branches which offer students opportunities for personal and professional development.

Benn Rapson then highlights that that the lapsing policy document is from a previous semester which lists all the policies which are lapsing and not necessarily the ones being voted on. DC announces that we will revisit this at the end of the Student Parliament meeting to give time for the correct polices to be distributed via the website.

3. Change It Proposal

a. **Make the consent module mandatory for all students**

This policy was proposed by Eva Curran, Women's Rep and was regarding making the consent training module mandatory. Eva introduced this to the group and highlighted that consent is an issue that effects all of us. One student asked if there would be an in-person option. Eva said that it is not feasible to run multiple sessions and that this is a course based online. Whilst an in-person format has worked in the past an online offering would have a wider reach. A question was asked about whether this would be mandatory for all students, and Eva said that if students didn't want to engage with it, there would be an opt-out option. Another student asked about safeguards. Eva says if you don't feel comfortable you don't have to do it but that she has worked with rape crisis on this to develop a comprehensive online educational resource. At this point, the proposal went to a vote and the DC opened the voting system.

The vote took place at this point.

- **94% voted yes. The Change It proposal is approved.**

At this point, the DC highlighted that there is currently a Change It Idea on creating a Commuting Students Rep position as a non-executive officer role, and if anyone wanted

more information about the role then they were encouraged to get in touch with the proposers.

4. Policy on Active and Unconditional Support for the Strikes

DC outlined how this would work and invited those in support of the strikes to read out a statement for 2 minutes. A student in attendance spoke in favour of the proposal, which has been summarised below:

The Student Union currently has a policy called 'Supporting Industrial Action'. (The policy can be found on page 33 of Strath Union's standing policies, the link to which can be found here: <https://www.strathunion.com/union/governance/policy/file/studentvoice/Strath-Union-Standing-Policies/>)

Whilst the wording of this is vague, I feel confident in saying that despite recent actions meeting these requirements before the break, the Student Union did not meet its responsibility in doing all that it could within the confines of the law. We are looking forward to seeing what Strath Union will be changing over this semester and it would be good to avoid this situation in the future.

So, we hope that we can lay out a list of concrete expectations that constitute the bare minimum required to qualify as supporting the strike. Whilst we would expect the Student Union to go beyond these minimum requirements to fulfil the responsibilities, these serve as a more enforceable baseline. It is also worth noting that in terms of this current strike action, actual progress on pay differentials for marginalised groups like women for which Strathclyde is particularly bad relative to other universities in the UK. Strath Union likes to position itself as a champion of women's issues and other progressive issues and right now, it has the opportunity to live up to that and deliver on material benefits for these groups.

At this point, arguments against the proposal were invited by the DC.

VP Sport Ronan Welch commented that he had reservations with the word 'unconditional' with regards to supporting strike action. He highlighted that in December there was significant disruption to students' exams. And, that whilst he does support strike action, the unconditional element of the proposed change does not sit well with him.

Molly Biggar HaSS Faculty Rep, who was joining via Zoom, commented:

For many students the university is a place that they have worked hard to get to. And, while I included support the strikes as other students do, the university is a place where students can access electricity and various facilities that have been difficult to afford during the cost-of-living crisis.

The unconditional element which Ronan commented on is the other aspect which I really struggle to support with this proposal because no student or anyone should be forced to not come to campus to access these facilities when they have the need for them. And, also just with the social media posting, I don't think anyone should be expected to post anything that is patrolled or monitored by anyone. I know personally that my university-linked Instagram

account is what I choose to post on it. I am never asked to post anything or feel encouraged to post anything; it is of my own free will. So, it is that part of it that I would oppose. So, it is the unconditional aspect of it that I would be questioning for all students when not all students are involved in student government, as for example, not everyone attends Student Parliament. So, how are these students expected to just support the policy?

Ari Hamilton, the Disabled Students Rep, raised a similar point to Molly Biggar regarding access for students:

I really support the strikes, but I have a potential problem with discouraging students from crossing a picket line. As Disabled Student's Rep, I can say that this campus is not accessible by any means and there are cases where a student, as much as they might not want to, especially if they have mobility issues, might have to access the union with it being right in the middle of campus. They may wish to access the building for other reasons, for example, electricity. So how can you avoid this with the wording of the policy as it stands.

Maia Peat, the LGBT+ Rep who joined via Zoom, commented that:

...I support the general sentiment of the policy and that as a union, we should support other unions and the strikes. However, the unconditional aspect is a bit unreasonable. Perhaps there is scope to negotiate with the UCU so that they do not picket outside the Union or spaces where students would need to access facilities like electricity and hot water. So, would it be possible to have friendly talks between us and other unions that are striking?

Jay (student in attendance) spoke on behalf of the students proposing the policy in response to the points raised by those opposing the wording of the policy. Points made are summarised below:

All the students can still access the Union during a strike. The quickest way to end disruption is to support the strike. The cost-of-living crisis is being weaponised, and staff are using foodbanks. The UCU has the same fight as students. Internal bickering in the Union shouldn't affect the policy.

Another student (name not recorded) said that:

... there might be some confusion about what a strike is and its purposes which is to cause disruption and to disrupt production. The use of asymmetrical language is very interesting in terms of disruptions. A lot of the emphasis is on workers to suck it up and handle things gracefully, but I think that student's exams being disrupted should not be a reason to not support the strike, it should be a reason to be angry with the university.

President Adam Morrow commented that on Thursday 30th January, the leader of the UCU will be attending a Q&A where students will have the opportunity to come and ask questions.

VP Sport Ronan Welch then spoke against the policy. He highlighted that he understands the point of the strikes is to create disruption but that we should be disrupting the university instead. Disrupting exams can affect student's careers and that is why he doesn't agree with

the unconditional element of the proposed policy. Students shouldn't have the rest of their lives impacted due to strike action.

A student (name not recorded) speaking in favour of the policy noted the following:

It was never about all students within the university supporting the strikes, it was more focused on the Union in particular. So, if that is a concern, we are never going to control what all students think it was more so about the Union as we are supposed to work together. In terms of us and the strikes disrupting exams, a communication was issued that if student's exams are affected by us, then they cannot get less than 40% on their exams so they are not able to fail.

Jay (student in attendance) summarised the proposal as stated below:

We need to disrupt consumption as students are money for the university. The quickest way to resolve this is through disruption.

Molly Biggar then spoke against the policy in response to the 'for' arguments that have been given:

A lot of the responses that have been given are feeling like they are taking back parts specific parts of the policy which you have proposed. So, perhaps the policy requires a revision if you are saying that you are not asking all students to unconditionally support the policy when that is what your policy is saying.

I don't think you have addressed what I had said about social media yet, but I know this came up the last time this proposal was submitted. I think that with the section on social media, I am especially against. I do support the strikes and I don't always post on my social media every day because I'm not always active every day. But that is not to say I don't support the strikes. I understand that disruption is what a strike is but as students, disrupting other students' exams, I don't see any fairness in that. And I think that expecting these students who have suffered through those exams with your disruption. Yeah, they have passed it but probably not as much as they wanted to or studied hard enough for.

A student (name not recorded), summarise the closing arguments in support of the policy were given.

It is relatively clear that the social media thing is targeted more towards the Student' Union. Part of what you do is when you join the Union is to give up some autonomy and work for the people. There seems to be a lot of arguments against strikes in general and we can litigate the ethics of strikes at some point, but that is supposedly already decided. It is clear here that some people do support strikes which is your own personal views but that conflicts with what is written down.

DC then moved to a vote on this proposal, and reminded attendees that only the elected officers are entitled to vote.

Voting on this policy commenced with a result of **38% in favour, 18% abstentions, and 47% against so the vote has failed.**

An accessibility break was taken at this point.

5. Returning to the Lapsing Policy

Attendees were given the opportunity to view this document again. The DC highlighted that if anyone wished to propose a change or talk about this then we would probably have to leave this to another time. However, if people were happy to vote on this then we could do so now. DC offered again time for everyone to review the document and let the room know if there were any issues on this and if not, we could move into voting procedure on this.

VP Education Arran Lamont wished to comment that all the policies here are lapsing and were published after the last Student Parliament meeting. To his knowledge there were no comments made on this. The policies are lapsing largely as they are outdated or need to be rewritten. Some policies have been replaced by something else and a few of them need to be revised.

Grace Alom, the Part Time Student's Rep who joined via Zoom wanted to highlight the policy on '30% Tuition Fee Refund for all Self-funded Fee-Paying Students':

...This impacts part-time students as many of them are self-funded. It would be great to have some kind of welfare package for them as it is not easy combining school with work. Most of the time they have to pay bills, so they really need the support. So, I feel like this policy should be retained at 30% or at least some kind of percentage should be given to them.

In response to Grace's comment, VP Education commented that for context, this was put into policy by a PGT Rep in the Business School last year as there were discussions around a fee rebate for those who were working online due to COVID and who could not come onto campus. One of the stipulations around that policy was that it would lapse at the end of the last academic year. Since COVID, the debate has died down around this and this policy was more in response to that specific set of circumstances. VP Education offered to chat further with Grace on another support package which could be put in place moving forward.

Benn Rapson wished to highlight the 'Education Funding Policy Free-for-All' which was due to lapse. Benn argued that this policy should be under the 'rewrite' column with the reasoning that it is an old policy which confirms commitment to free education. The reason it has been renewed numerous times is that there are other policies which talk about free education, and they all reference this specific policy so procedurally, it would make more sense to rewrite this.

Benn also wanted to touch on the 'Military Recruitment' policy which is in the rewrite column. Benn provided historical context by saying that these types of organisations don't allow students with disabilities to participate so it goes against Strath Union's Equal Opportunities policy. So, it is a bit of a balancing act between adhering to this policy and providing students the opportunity to participate in this type of activity should they wish to.

Ari Hamilton, Disabled Students Rep asked what the ideas were around the 'Flexible Learning' and 'Mind your own Business' policies in the rewrite column were. VP Education spoke on the Flexible Learning policy stating that the policy was outdated and didn't really reflect where we are post-pandemic with the flipped classroom and hybrid lectures for example. This will be reviewed, and work will be done around this in the next couple of months.

With regards to the 'Mind your own Business' policy, VP Welfare Lewis McDermott was working on this and President Adam Morrow briefly mentioned that this policy would be rewritten to allow for a more broad application.

The DC asked if everyone if they are happy to vote now or if this should be pushed back. The policies would be voted on as one block.

Benn Rapson wished to highlight again the lapsing 'Education Funding Policy Free for All'. Benn asked for a floor amendment to move this into the 'Policies to Rewrite' column. This was accepted by the attendees.

Democracy Convenor moved to a vote on this proposal

83% in favour, 17% against with 0 abstentions. The proposal to lapse the policy was approved

6. Any other Business

Jay asked what the future plans were for the Strath Union is to support the UCU. President Adam Morrow said the event on Thursday 30th January was offering the space to organise with coffee and tea being provided. Strath Union would also be giving the UCU more space on social media channels. The event will be recorded and will help the UCU get their side of the story out. A space on the website will also be available with more information on, for example, pickets, petitions and signposting.

Jay asked should it not be 'this is an event to support the strike' however this appears like a debate. Adam said it about giving the UCU a platform and helping to educate students on what the UCU are and what they stand for.

Benn Rapson added that it was great Strath Union was being more proactive and to see that some of the executive team made it to the picket lines to support the strike.

Adam Crawley reminded everyone about the elections with nominations closing on Tuesday 21st February. The DC reminded everyone about the upcoming AGM.

Actions:

1. Correct the spelling of Molly Biggar's name in Student Parliament 3 minutes.