

Student Parliament 6 Minutes

Tuesday 23th March 2021 – 17:00 – 19:00

Chair: Kyle McGettigan (Democracy Convenor)

Officers In attendance: Aspen Lynch (Disabled Students' Rep), Andrew Merchant (Faculty Rep Science), Liam Mosson (Interfaith Rep), Dorothea Hinrichs (Postgraduate Students Rep), Zoe MacPherson (Women's Rep), Rachel Cairns (VP Inclusion), Benn Rapson (VP Welfare), Marc Schachtsiek (Faculty Rep Engineering), Kayla-Megan Burns (President), Ru Wallace (VP Community), Emily McIlhatton (Faculty Rep HaSS), Jenna Gilmartin (Mature Students' Rep), Sean Jamieson (Part-Time Students Rep), Vinny Williamson (LGBT+ Rep)

Apologies: Eilidh Sneddon (VP Sport), Victoria Welsh (Faculty Rep Business), Anna McKinley (International Students' Rep)

In attendances: Jessica Lell, Ailidh Hamilton, Callum Barclay, Iman Chaudhry, Daksha Sharma, Maisie Keough

No apologies: Adanna Onu (BAME Rep)

Staff in attendance: Leo Howes (Head of Student Engagement) and Adam Crawley (Policy & Campaigns Co-ordinator)

1) Agenda

Democracy Convenor (DC) welcomes attendees and introduces the Code of Conduct.

- 2) Approval and noting of previous minutes
 - a. Student Parliament Minutes – 25th February

DC introduces the minutes. No comments, these pass by consensus

- b. Executive Committee – February to March

DC introduces the Executive Committee minutes. No comments.

3) Executive Updates & Questions

Rachel (VP Inclusion): Working with University Race Equity Focus Group, looking at next steps. Took forward Equity in Access Courses. Took forward NDA policy to NUS Scotland – some discussion around amendments but no news, this is going forward as is. Went to the NUS Scotland Conference, lots of good conversations. Able to question Scottish Elections Candidates about NDAs and taking forward to NUS UK Conference. Meeting with staff in NUS Scotland to take NDA work forward and also trying to canvas more support. Looking to make major change within the University, working with Legal Compliance Officer and looking at changes in the sector.

Working with Head of Student Experience to work on ESHE and working with people from the Emily Test, great to have someone from the third sector come along. Brought forward recommendations following on from the Kevin O'Gorman and looking at making in the culture. Also went to the NUS

Liberation Conference, loads of good discussions around intersectionality and policing. Working on access and accessibility and doing some mapping. Looking at provisions for people who stutter.

Kayla: A few things Rachel is covered as well. Working on University Culture – a few months ago, put out a statement following the Kevin O’Gorman news to ask for tangible actions to make campus safe. Running Anti-Hate survey, part of the anti-hate campaign alongside action on prejudice and action on sectarianism, gathering information about hate in the community so we can fight this in as effective a way as possible. There is a prize draw for filling this out. Pulling together a Union Sustainability plan and working with SOS UK and Keep Scotland Beautiful to try to reach net carbon zero as much as possible. I’ve been doing carbon literacy training and working on divestment within the University. Alongside ethical and fossil fuel divestment, we’re looking at arms divestment.

Been working with VPE on the No Detriment Policy (NDP). After lots of edits, hoping to announce and have it all confirmed tomorrow at University Senate. Appreciate the disruption on this and stress students have been facing. Looking at creating Student Street, where all the student services you need will be in one place with some nice things. Where Richmond Street is now – hopefully should be the place to be and will foster a sense of community.

Liam: Appreciate that NDPs are already on the agenda. I’ve got two questions but I’ll give a little background. On 27th January, all the Exec and Union media said that an NDP was confirmed and explained which student groups would be helped. But two months later, we still have no idea what this is going to entail. We’ve been told that it’s because there’s red tape, but why as this not been made public, so the students can support. Second questions, The NDP draft is going to the Senate, will there be a delay in publishing and why haven’t any students outside of the Exec seen this?

Kayla: There’s 10 students at University senate, who make up 10%. Me and Chelbi have been very closely The drafts have varied so much, it will keep changing, and we were worried that this would confuse things. The University promised a No Detriment Policy and we’ve been working with them every day – we’ve been pushing for a better, more supportive policy. We could have accepted it in the first instance but that meant we would have accepted a lower quality policy. We’ve already had it confirmed that it’ll cover this semester and the last semester as well. Felt discussions on line have been quite harsh – we’ve been providing update and I’ll be honest, I feel quite hurt by this and felt quite intimidated to come along.

DC thanks Kayla, notes that the NDP will be discussed later and moves onto Ru.

Ru: Been out for a few weeks since last Parliament so haven’t had much time to do work, have been at NUS Scotland Conference. Finished up Charity month and handed out prizes – just over £3000 raised. Completed STAR Awards shortlisting and finetuning the event, the event is on 1st April, would encourage everyone to come along. Been working with an external organisation to deliver a fun event. We’ve got a feed of all the information that goes out to Clubs and Societies, which makes information a lot more visible, more information will be going out in the clubs newsletter.

Chelbi: NUS Scotland Conference - discussions around Erasmus and it’s removal, and looking at the new Turing Scheme. This is an opportunity to look at different lengths of studies to make it inclusive. Asked NUS to pressure the government. Lots of discussion about housing costs – lots of actions but it’s saddening to hear the situations that students are in. Been raising about Lecture recordings, feeding back on issues students raise. Having discussions at SOTAY (Start of the Academic Year) Committee – looking at library support and assessment support. Discussion at NUS on course delays, looking at the impact this would have on students at Stathclyde, particularly students on placements. Departments have been out with support provisions. Sit on University court – we’ve

met our Widening Access targets but looking at support for students, ensuring retention and progress.

Helped host Elections Hustings, looking forward to the handover. Been running focus groups, looking at study groups and what support students need. Looking at what support is needed for students to take complaints and recommendations to take issues forward. Sat on Strathclyde Acceleration team and looking at campus security and how to change the campus. People miss campus and looking to maximise the space, looking at balance between livestreaming and physical sessions.

Nearly hit all of my manifesto points. Very proud of Faculty reps. Lecture recordings are here to stay. Didn't get great uptake from PGR for Faculty Reps Elections but looking to do more and working with DRG – exciting to have the new reps in Parliament next year. Touch on No Detriment Policy – everyone should understand why it's delayed; we've put out several updates. There are several structures for policy to pass through within the University which can be quite long and drawn out. This has been a really big piece of work and to have it undermined online has been quite hurtful. If you have questions, we are open to discussion, would encourage people to reach out.

Callum: Have only received lecture recordings for half the semester in one class. Is this going to be a University wide thing?

Chelbi: should be university wide – the only reason you shouldn't have it should be if a course is discussing sensitive topics. You should be getting them right now, happy to follow up if you haven't been receiving things.

Benn: Not feeling 100% this evening, so apologies for keeping my camera off. Was off for a few weeks. Working with the Glasgow Student Tenants Union, looking to get things up and running for next year when more students will be returning. Feeding into residencies master plan and making sure that the University consider the effect of construction noise on students on campus. Scholarships for estranged students, has been endorsed by Student Experience Committee, nearly ready. Once this is done, will look at Postgraduate Widening Access bursaries. Strathclyde still needs to look at Tuition fees in the short term and long term. Working on second draft of SMHA with Eilidh. Hoping to have 2nd draft done by end of this current term. Looking at vaccine rollout among student body.

Eilidh (VP Sport) on annual leave and will provide an update at a later date.

4) Policy Proposal

a. Equity in Access Courses

DC invites proposer of the policy to speak.

Dorothea: The University has entry requirements, which I believe are discriminatory. There are lots of countries from global south and Africa where no grade from your high school is acceptable for entry. They then propose that they do an access course for 6 months – these access courses cost £16000 for 6 months. Compared to other access courses by Centre for Lifelong Learning for mature students – offer a similar course for £500. These access courses aren't ran by the University, it's ran by an external provider, these students aren't represented by Strathclyde Union.

Basically about opposing private company to offer these courses for ridiculous amount of money is against our principles.

DC opens up to the floor:

Rachel: As organisation, Strath Union has been at forefront to Social Justice Movements, and we've always been against the privatisation of education. This is one form that has been privatised – we need to support international and home students. This stops people from participating. This practice is predatory. This is something NUS has done a bit of work on – unfortunately, many unions are not aware that it's a private company. Study Group alone actually operates across the UK and North America. Since we did the research, I've discussed this with other officers, and they aren't aware. Officers need to work on this for years to come.

Chelbi: Thanks for bringing this to light, even I wasn't aware of this. The amounts people need to pay are ridiculous

Dorothea sums up the policy and asks for support. There's no speech against.

DC explains the voting procedure to officers and opens the vote. The vote was done by a show of hands of the officers present.

This policy passes.

5) Lapsing policy

DC explains the process for discussing and retaining lapsing policy. All attendees are welcome to speak on these policies.

Note: A table of all the lapsing policy and their status can be found at the end of the minutes.

1) Keep Privatisation out of classroom

Chelbi: This outlines several important things, having a policy that stands against it would be great.

DC moves to a vote. This policy is **RETAINED**

2) Prevent Prevent

Rachel: Sometimes seen as not affecting Scotland, but it's still an issue that needs this policy to be retained.

DC moves to a vote. This policy is **RETAINED**

3) Our calendar, our academic year

Chelbi: It would be good to let it lapse.

DC moves to a vote. This policy **LAPSES**

4) National Day of Walk Out

Dorothea: I think we should keep this. Immigration policies are still horrible, we should keep it.

DC moves to a vote. This policy is **RETAINED**

5) Counselling cuts

Doro: We still don't provide as much support as other Universities, so we should continue to support counselling provision.

DC moves to a vote. This policy is **RETAINED**

6) LGBT+ Counselling

Liam: The same reasons as Doro, we still need this policy.

Rachel: Like Chelbi says, agree in principle, this is updated by the Demographic Specific Counselling Policy, and it's already being worked on, so this can lapse.

Dorothea: Would it have any negative impact to have both?

Rachel: Don't see any reason for us not to keep it.

Liam: Happy for this to lapse, based on the discussion.

DC moves to a vote. This policy **LAPSES**

7) Tick Tick

Doro: it's about disability competent.

Kayla: Two tick system no longer exists so won't be able to achieve this policy, there's a disability confident campaign, the HR and Culture working group is working on this.

Doro: So we do have a policy on disability competent?

Kayla: We don't have a policy on that but we're taking this forward.

DC moves to a vote. This policy **LAPSES**

8) Bring Water to the desert

Doro: Basically, last time I was on campus, still not enough water fountains.

Ru: This is a bit at odds with our sustainability goals. Obviously important to have drinking water available – some parts of the discussion are redundant. Would be better to have a new policy at the next Parliament

DC moves to a vote. This policy **LAPSES**

9) Removal of fundraising for the Philippines

DC notes retaining this policy will not bring back the original policy it refers to.

DC moves to a vote. This policy **LAPSES**

10) Preserve our green spaces

Liam: I think it's important to keep, particularly as students should be kept involved.

Ru: With the fact that Rottenrow has been redeveloped a lot since this has happened since this policy has passed, but some of the resolves are important.

DC moves to a vote. This policy **LAPSES**

11) Grading for students studying part of their degree abroad

Chelbi: Trying to get answers to this, I don't know enough about this. Keen to look into it a little further, as it falls under my remit. But if anyone has any more info, let me know.

Emily: For information, I went on exchange last year, all my transcripts are no grade included, it's a pass or fail.

Marc: Looked at going abroad, depending on when you go, it depends on whether it counts or not. My department says it's on the fourth year that count. This limits the flexibility of what you can do.

DC moves to a vote. This policy **LAPSES**

12) Let's get debating

DC moves to a vote. This policy **LAPSES**

DC notes that people would like a break. The meeting is paused and resumed at 18:30.

6) Any Other Business

DC welcomes anyone back, any attendee can speak.

Liam: A few points to mention, so let me know if I go on too long. Wanted to raise more points about the No Detriment Policy. To respond to some of the points raised by Exec. One of the points raised was to 'talk to people' Engagement should be happening from the top down, the president of Strath Union, who should be asking as the spokesperson and ensuring good governance, there has not been a post since the announcement so this is not engagement. Will Exec apologise for not engaging with the student body?

Only once was the NDP mentioned in the last two weeks in the Exec Committee Minutes and there was very little details. We hear that this has been worked on, and I hope this has being worked on – I will be one of those students taking exams under COVID conditions, like the 300 students who signed the petition who want to see the details of this policy. If it's the University's fault that there's been a delay, you should tell us. Students want to work with the SU to lobby the Union, we should have been told about this, we need detail. Support is dropping and details is crucial to maintain support. Why haven't questions been answers, why haven't students been engaged with, and will the Exec give us some clarity as to why we've waited so long with nothing in response.

Ru: The fact there's not been a post, Facebook is not the only place, the information is going out through different platforms. You can message, email, and talk to any of us. There's no need to raise this right now as we're happy to help and we're always keen to let people know. I feel like this is not the most helpful way to immediately raise into a petition. We don't need this to be a matter of conflict in the Union.

Chelbi: I would say that you're probably wrong saying that we haven't been communication, I've been communicating to reps, I hold biweekly meetings with reps, who have been closer to the issue. I've posted on Strath Reps MyPlace, including a video 2 weeks ago and a new video now. I think the nature of this has all be gone about particularly wrong. We're meant to work together constructively. On the points of holding to accountability, you have not reached out to us when you launched the petition. I think there's a misinformation element. I think it's concerning that instead of working collaboratively, you have chosen to diminish the work of others – this could have caused more unrest, particularly to those who signed the petition who thought there's no policy. Just as a point going forward, people can do what they would like to do, but a lot of this would have been avoided if you've sent us an email. I think the way that it's went was borderline harassment as you knew these facts and didn't engage with us in a meaningful way. That's my perspective and I feel like spreading misinformation like that is detrimental.

DC pointed attendees to the Code of Conduct to ensure that attendees are speaking appropriately to each other during the discussions.

Liam: I'm glad Chelbi picked up on the point of me failing to reach out to other reps - At the last Parliament meeting, I asked Chelbi directly what can reps and students do to put pressure on the University, and I didn't get an answer. The VP Education says that this is borderline harassment, this is quite a serious accusation. Students having an opinion is not necessarily untrue. Nothing that the exec have provided can counteract the points that I've raised. I have hinted at a lack of a quality NDP due to the exec not giving us enough information.

DC reminds attendees not to interrupt when others are speaking. If people wish to speak, they should add it to the speaking list. If you have any issues, contact DC or staff support.

Liam: When Chelbi accuses me of not acting under the Code of Conduct. They've not been giving respect to those students who've signed the petition. There will be a report coming in after this. If we can get 300 students saying exec can't do a job, I'm sure we can get 200 students for all the Executive who haven't been doing their job. Votes of No Confidence will be getting launched, if the Executive don't do their job. You haven't done your job and do it now.

DC: Notes that the language always should be respectful and we should keep volume down. Aware that people might be stressed about this, but we need to maintain a level of decorum. This is not the appropriate place to take issues out on each other personally. If we're going to continue this conversation in a productive way, we need to keep an eye on what we've saying.

Kayla: It is a massive thing to accuse us of not doing a job, we've tried to do this as well as we can. I really care about student issues. You said that we didn't give any constructive updates, in comments and in a video, we have tried to give updates. We've shared policies and said about senate. Quite shocked about this, I believe that you should have been aware. Benn had noted that he's discussed the policy with you before the petition was put up, so you were aware of it, though this has snowballed and is out of proportion. I fully respect the 300 students who have signed this position, and we know that students want to know about this. The reason that this hasn't happened is that because we were given low quality policies which weren't as supportive or acceptable. Why didn't we publicise the drafts? It would have been in case students took this as misinformation and it was misleading. I've shared information with students who've been in touch with me about this, and shared similar policies. What I would like to ask Parliament is what would like to know what people want from this discussion? I'm hurt that I've been accused of not doing my job, which has been detrimental to my health. I have put every single bit of myself in this job, and with the support of my team. I would give everything I could for students and I'm more than willing to be help to account - I feel like that was a personal attack and hurtful. I do give regular updates. If you wanted to support, you can get in touch - I appreciate you did do this at the previous parliament. I would have been supportive of a petition, but I feel that it was nearly bullying as I was met with hostility. I understand this happens especially when stresses are high. The bullying aspects was more about the tone. I think it's important that students should get involved. The policy is going tomorrow, we can't speed it up, but we're still working on it with the University - I'm expecting latest updates first thing tomorrow morning. What do we want to get from this discussion?

DC reminds speakers that they should address words to speaker instead of each other. Reminded attendees that speakers aren't allowed to speak more than twice on an issue unless all other attendees have the options to speak.

Benn: Take the tone down, we need to scale this back. It's completely right to hold myself and other officers to an account in a constructive manner. We have a few different issues here which are getting conflated. Chelbi and Kayla have been working on this for months, and it's been good work, the number of committees Chelbi is on is insane and I have a lot of respect for that. I have a lot of respect for that. I've briefly seen a previous draft of the policy and I think you've done well to get it where it is. The hold-up has been the University who have taken too long to get pen to paper. I remember that we were supposed to have a draft a month ago and we didn't have one. You've put a lot of work into this. There has been communication but perhaps not always through Facebook, which isn't the only mode of communication. There's nothing we can do today to make the policy come any sooner but there are some points of learning – there have been messages to reps through StrathReps but perhaps, we could have done more updates through Union channels saying that we're working on NDP. This is something to take forward and I think this would have quelled a lot of this discussion. There's more that we can do around communication in the long term.

Chelbi: Just to respond to a question from Parliament, the reason I suggested that students shouldn't take this on as a personal issue is that I believe that we had it in hand and we've had the policy secured. I work with students who are very stressed and with reps who are carrying the burden for getting the NDP. My concern for reps this year has been about mental health. We spent a lot of the Academic Conference talking about wellbeing. I've also found this a big burden. I work with the staff on the other end of the emails and I completely sympathise with students on this. I've been through it myself and I've been working with students all the time. There are times to get students behind a cause, but I think people have been listening on this issue. We've been going back to the University with updates and wanting to improve the policy. I've been trying to streamline the representative system, and I think better communications is a part of that – no-one has cracked it yet but we've made massive gains. I guess the reason students won't have seen this is because it's confidential, as we're bound to not share by confidentiality. We could end up in a disciplinary for telling too much and this is something that's taken quite seriously. We need to toe the line between representing students and working with the University. I believe that we've done the best we could have done about it, I apologise if students think that there's more we could have done. And hopefully this should be out tomorrow.

Vinny: I live with Chelbi and I see all the work she does, I see she's working so hard on these issues and particularly this policy. I see her starting early and working late to make the best policy, and I'm very proud of her. I want to bring up the current topics, linking to the Sarah Everard case, I've noticed that particularly of the Exec female, AFAB and femme aligned reps, they have always been challenged and overstepped, and sometimes we feel like we're not being appreciated or respected. I've had cases of harassment which I've reported to the Union, and this entire situation makes me feel so uncomfortable. Kayla and Chelbi have worked so hard and to see these comments online harassing them about how nothing is being done, though I've seen the Exec do update. It's a shame some students feel like they haven't been updated. They have been working on it and they have been sending the comments. There have been comments at every Parliament this year from women and AFAB people about how unsafe parliament feels. This has made me not want to take part in student parliament – and I'm so thankful that I don't have to come back to these again as it's so miserable how some people put down others. Thanks for all the work Chelbi.

Liam: Firstly, I completely sympathise with everything Vinny has stated. No-one based on any factor of who they are should be made uncomfortable at Parliament or in their role. But people who do their role have to be held to account. If this conversation had happened earlier on in the process, the petition and the outrage wouldn't have happened, as we have the reason why it's taken so long,

which is the University holding things up. Though we haven't been given the answers we've been working on. I think the language has been out of hand on all sides, and I apologise if I did make anyone feel uncomfortable. But the insinuation that students commenting on a Facebook post, who are stressed and going into exams, of course emotions will be flared. When this borders into illegality of course this has to be pointed out but if it's an opinion, we can't just put down opinions that don't agree with those higher up. I've reached out previously, and I didn't follow up, but there's certainly multiple points that have to be answered.

Kayla asked what do I want to see – some of the answers have been answered. I appreciate information about confidentiality. The Union would have had a position going into it and that what we should have been made aware of. There have still been questions that haven't been answered. There were lists of areas the Union wanted to target but no specific information put out, and there would have been no obligation to hide what the Union wanted to achieve. If it gets passed at Senate, how long will it take to be implemented, and how long for staff to be brought up to speed on the various aspects? We have to be cautious as there are so many issues at play, and to distract from the claims of harassment for purely opposition and for making it personal for a disagreement in opinion, we need to be careful. Students demand assurances that they're not going to be penalised as a result of COVID. Whether myself or the Exec approach this differently is irrelevant, the Union could have been more transparent.

DC ends the discussion and closes this Parliament meeting.

The following is a list of the retained and lapsed policy. The retained policy will be kept for a further 3 years.

Keep Privatisation out of the classroom	Retained
Prevent Prevent	Retained
Our Uni, our academic year	Lapsed
National Day of Walk Out	Retained
Counselling Cuts	Retained
LGBT+ Counselling	Lapsed
Tick Tick	Lapsed
Bring water to the desert	Lapsed
Removal of the Fundraising for the Philippines	Lapsed
Preserve our green spaces	Lapsed
Grading for students studying part of their degree abroad	Lapsed
Let's Get debating	Lapsed