# Student Council

*Thursday 21 February 2019, 6-8 pm, Teviot Debating Hall*

## MEETING SUMMARY

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1. **Welcome and overview**
   *Welcome and overview of the agenda by Amalie Sortland, Student Council Facilitator at Edinburgh University Students' Association.*

   The Student Council Facilitator also made Student Council aware that currently there are no candidates for some Activities, Section, and NUS Scotland Delegate positions. Nominations for these positions have been extended to **5pm** on **Monday 25 February**.

2. **Accountability**

Reports from the Sabbatical Officers were given, and questions were taken from the floor.

   I.  VP Activities and Services - Shenan Davis-Williams
   - **Question 1 [Clare - Faith, Belief & Spiritual Development Rep]:** Islamophobia Awareness Day is fantastic, I just wanted to ask if you are planning to do another day, or campaign against another hate crime?
   - **Answer 1:** Yes this is something I'm definitely going to look into. I was inspired from an event I was at, and if there is any other day we can do, please come speak to me.

Report passes **97.6%** in favour:

| Votes for | 60.5 |
|---|---|
| Votes Against | 1.5 |
| Abstain | 1.5 |

   I.  VP Community – Georgie Harris

- **Question 1 [Rob]:** You have been campaigning for a Peoples Vote as it was mandated, if we leave the EU in March as we are meant too, will you continue to campaign for a Peoples Vote?
- **Answer 1:** Yes, we were mandated to campaign for a Peoples Vote and we will continue to do so until we are mandated otherwise.
- **Question 2:** Regarding housing, it's really great that you are speaking to politicians to highlight the need for restructuring of student housing. Have the Students' Association considered contacting Campaigning groups such as Living Rent, as they have been working with the University Accommodation Service to make sure students aren't being ripped off and treated fairly?
- **Answer 2:** We have met with Living Rent, they have been invited to our Housing Fair and we have met a few times throughout the year to link up. Living Rent is a tenants union in Scotland to support people that are having issues with their tenancy and make sure that they are being treated in a fair way, so if people need to claim money back or anything, they can support them. They do great work.

Report passes **97.6%** in favour:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Votes for** | 62 |
| **Votes Against** | 1.5 |
| **Abstain** | 0 |

II. <u>VP Education – Diva Mukherji</u>

- **Question 1 [Euan – UG Divinity School Rep]**: How much support have the Students' Association received from members of staff regarding the Interruption of Study Policy?
- **Answer 1:** Great Question. So there's been quite a long legacy of Sabbaticals working against this policy for the past four years and it's interesting to see how members of staff have changed their support over time. Sometimes it's coming from a genuine place of support, and staff who genuinely believe this would help students. I sit on a committee where the paper was presented and needed approval, and it struck me that there are 15-20 people on this committee, of which I am the only student representative. They know the Students Association is against this, and we think it's not fair to students. The conversation should be open to all students not just the one student who is in the room. Although some staff are coming from a place of concern. Sorry that's a mixed answer. Happy to answer any more questions that you have.

Report passes **100%** in favour:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Votes for** | 63.5 |
| **Votes Against** | 0 |
| **Abstain** | 0 |

III. <u>VP Welfare – Kai O'Doherty</u>

- **Question 1**: Thank you for expanding on mental health support. It's great that they are going to hire more counsellors, but do they intend to hire more people of colour as well?
- **Answer 1:** The new Wellbeing Centre will be open in 2019 and will have seven more rooms for counselling which has been a restricting factor so far. So with more rooms, we will have more counsellors almost like a domino effect. The University are responsible for hiring counsellors and the University BME thematic review will also have a look at those things, and at a systemic level we will continue to do this.
- **Question 2 [Isabella – BME Officer]:** Firstly, thank you for everything you have done. Last Student Council we voted in favour for a Women of Colour Mural, can you give us an update on what is happening with this?
- **Answer 2:** I have been working with Isabella for a space for the mural, as Student Council voted overwhelmingly on this. I have also met with the Principal who has agreed to find a dedicated space for this on George Square campus, so we are working on this. It should be by the end of semester, and it should be really great.

Report passes **97.6%** in favour:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Votes for** | 62 |
| **Votes Against** | 1.5 |
| **Abstain** | 0 |

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IV.    President – Eleri Connick

- **Question 1 [Laura – PPLS UG School Rep]:** I was wondering what you and the Sabbaticals do at University Court and what that is about?
- **Answer 1:** I'm still trying to understand myself, but both Kai and I sit on University Court. It's weird as we both sit there as students but also as trustees. It's the highest governing body where the big strategic decisions made at the University. At the last meeting on Monday, we discussed students experience and student support, and we also showed our #WeAreEdinburgh profiles which was great. Kai and I are representatives, but most members of the court are from around the world, so it's really good for them to see what our students are doing. The President submits a report and updates about what the Sabbaticals and Students' Association are doing, and what students have recognised as issues. At the meeting in April they will have a 'Meet the Court' which students will be invited to. I think its April 22nd, so come and meet court members and ask them what they do.

Report passes **91.1%** in favour:

| Votes for | 56.5 |
|---|---|
| Votes Against | 5.5 |
| Abstain | 1.5 |

3. **Motions**
   I.    #LetsTalk About Men's Mental Health

- **Question 1 [Oona]:** Have you given thought to how this motion would interact with the Sports Union if it passes?
- **Answer 1:** Really good question. Every team, and I think the gym too, should all have a personal responsibility to take notice and worry about mental health. The gym has a huge responsibility and we all have our parts to play. It's the elephant in the room, and getting the Students' Association to talk about it should help remove some of the stigma about it.
- **Question 2 [Iona – Volunteering Rep]:** For lobbying the University for Mental Health support, do you know what this specialised support would look like?
- **Answer 2:** It's purposely been left vague so we aren't tying the University down so we could always do more. At a Sports level but also education and academically, if it's recognised as a campus wide issue, then we will talk about it more and hopefully end the stigma. There is a long way to go but we can get there eventually, especially if we can get students talking about it.
- **Question 3:** As a male student who does struggle, it's really encouraging to hear this being raised. My question is about getting more details about how this motion will be implemented, how do we get people to start talking and make sure it's not being swept under a carpet, especially as it's a huge University and there are many different backgrounds, how do we raise awareness?
- **Answer:** If the motion passes we would like lots of publicity and marketing about it. It's just the beginning and hopefully next year, if it's properly mandated we can go from there. It's the first time a Men's Mental Health Support has been brought as a motion, and by the time you graduate University, hopefully it will be more talked about.
- **Speech For [Eleri – President]:** It's a great motion, and in terms of how it would look like, it's amazing the amount of staff that have come forward, and I think working in partnership with staff who want to talk about it and its ok not to be ok. It's a far wider issue than Edinburgh University, and it will be great to work on this. It's a great motion and you should definitely vote for it.

- **Summation:** Thank you Kai for your help in shaping this. It's a start, and it's ok to reach out and it's ok not to be ok and it can happen to anyone. Mental health doesn't discriminate, and hopefully this passes and thanks for listening.

Motion passes **100%** in favour:

| Votes for | 62 |
|---|---|
| Votes Against | 0 |
| Abstain | 1.5 |

II.    <u>Take A Stance on Cyber-Safety</u>
- **No Questions asked.**
- **No Summation.**

Motion passes **100%** in favour:

| Votes for | 63.5 |
|---|---|
| Votes Against | 0 |
| Abstain | 0 |

III.    <u>10% Discount For Returning Postgraduate Students</u>
- **Question 1 [Emily – Part-time Rep]:** It's quite vague, its needs to apply to part-time students as well. It might leave it open to the University for full time students only.
- **Answer 1 [Eleri – President]:** I agree. There's a meeting on Monday that both Diva and I are attending, we will make sure to bring it up then.
- **Speech for [Kim – Activities Rep]:** This happens at other Universities and it would be really great if we did too.
  **Summation:** The University does offer a discount already, but it needs to be inclusive of everyone who studies at the University of Edinburgh, rather than just undergraduate students.

Motion passes **100%** in favour:

| Votes for | 59 |
|---|---|
| Votes Against | 0 |
| Abstain | 4.5 |

IV.    <u>Mental Health Awareness Slides</u>

- **Question 1 [Julia – UG Biological Sciences School Rep]:** It's a great idea including slides at the introduction of each semester. Would you be thinking how students might encounter problems later on in the semester and have forgotten the material from the start of the semester, have you thought about how slides can be shown more regularly or at different times of the semester? Would you be thinking about what slides include, is it support services that would be available or how students can engage and evaluate their own mental health?
- **Answer 1:** It could be on every Schools Learn page, a link related to mental health and reinforce that point. It's not talked about enough, so it would be a great start to introduce it and if it's talked about more regularly, and the resources are there so you can see them more clearly it would make

it easier. It would show all the different levels of support and resources available. It's ok to not be ok, scale of support and steps available to you, it's a scary subject to find out what is available, and it's a very daunting process, so hopefully making it clearer about what students can access would help.

- **Question 2 [Eileen – Disabled Students' Officer]:** It's a fantastic idea and I am loving it. It would be good practice if the School could email asking how are you doing at points, do you think it would be plausible to do once in a while with links about how you are doing more regularly from the Schools?
- **Answer 2:** It should be plausible if they are currently doing this, it would be great if we could mandate it so that all should do this, not sure why it's not been done before.
- **Question 3:** It's great to see so many things around Mental Health and Wellbeing Week and is it possible to make it a more year round thing around University? An introductory lecture is good but is it possible to get more signposts, posters, events around so it can be valued regardless of courses?
- **Answer 3:** Posters in toilets, screensavers on University computers or a presentation before logging in so it's something you can see and it's a constant reminder. So it's constantly talked about, it can end the stigma and more that we speak about it, the better.
- **Speech for [Oona]:** It's a fantastic motion, and the fact that there is willingness from the University, it's great. It's impressive to see it's already happening in some Schools but it's a start for some courses, and the increased awareness is a huge leap forward.
- **No Summation.**

Motion passes **100%** in favour:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Votes for** | 62 |
| **Votes Against** | 0 |
| **Abstain** | 1.5 |

The Student Council Facilitator reminded students that the voting period for elections is from the **4-7th March**, and encouraged them to vote.

**Meeting close**

Total number of ballots from students: **11**
Total number of ballots from elected representatives: **35**
Total number of ballots: **46**

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