

Representation & Democracy Student Council

Thursday 25 October, 6-8 pm, Teviot Debating Hall

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Welcome and overview

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

2. Accountability

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

I. President, Eleri Connick

- **Question 1 [Andrew]:** In your manifesto, you said you wanted to have Student Council recorded. Will this be achieved by the start of semester 2?
- **Answer 1:** Yes it was in my manifesto. There are a few issues regarding recording Student Council. For example, it wouldn't be fair to film everything as we sometimes discuss sensitive or contentious issues, and people might not want their views or questions shared outside the room. I hope that by doing video reports, the system is more accountable.
- **Question 2 [Rep]:** Currently the alumni discount of 10% is only available to self-funded students and getting a student loan doesn't count as self-funded. Is there anything that can be done about this?
- **Answer 2:** I am bamboozled that this is the case. I've been gathering information to find out what students can do to get around this, and how this is dealt with at other Scottish universities. The University should be encouraging students to stay, because you make part of this great community. We will be pushing on this.

Report passes **97%** in favour:

Votes for	96
Votes Against	3
Abstain	4.5

II. VP Activities & Services, Shenan Davis-Williams

- **No questions were asked.**

Report passes **96.5%** in favour:

Votes for	95.5
Votes Against	3.5
Abstain	4.5

III. VP Welfare, Kai O'Doherty



Representation & Democracy

- **Question 1** [Literature PhD Rep]: Won't the University's proposed plans about forcing student to interrupt their studies have repercussions for international students on sponsorship schemes? For example, it could affect their VISA, and might lead to them getting kicked out of the country.
- **Answer 1:** That's a great point. This is why we are opposed to the University's proposal on this, and have been for the last three years. Thanks for bringing it up.
- **Question 2 [Rep]:** Where are you up to on the rolling out of free sanitary products? Is this scheme going well?
- **Answer 2:** They're now on all campuses. Moon Cups should be arriving soon, and will be rolled out across all campuses. If you can't find any in your School, please let me know and so I can do something about it.

Report passes **96.6%** in favour:

Votes for	99
Votes Against	3.5
Abstain	1

IV. VP Education, Diva Mukherji

- **Question 1 [Phd Linguistics Rep]:** what is the Students' Association understanding of how the Erasmus scheme will operate in the future? What can we do to limit the impact on student experience on courses for which doing a year or semester abroad is an essential component?
- **Answer 1:** Great question. This is something which is incredibly important at this moment, and as with most things to do with us leaving the EU, there is still a bit of uncertainty. However, we do have a big input into how this goes. This is something that Eleri is working closely with the University on.
- **Eleri:** the University updated their webpages about Erasmus yesterday. I can send you the latest updates on this, but for those of you who are interested, please check the University's website.
- **Question 2 [Andrew]:** In your manifesto, you spoke about free printing credit for assessments with physical hand-ins, is there any progress on this?
- **Answer 2:** We have been working on this, especially in the wider context of hidden course costs that affect students. CAHSS has moved to online submissions for almost all of their submissions, and we're currently working on implementing online dissertations. CSE has just started working on a similar project as well, and we're helping develop a plan so students will not have to pay the whole cost out of their own pocket.

Report passes **96.6%** in favour:

Votes for	99
Votes Against	3.5
Abstain	1

V. VP Community, Georgie Harris

- **Question 1 [Rep]:** Have you done anything to encourage international, particularly American students to vote?
- **Answer 1:** I've been speaking to a few people, including student reps and the Global Office as this fits into my wider work on automatic voter registration. I know that the cost of sending the ballots



back home can be very expensive. I'd urge you to hand in your ballots at the US Consulate as they will post it for free.

- **Alex:** I'd like to reiterate that automatic voter registration is important, and helps keep international students connected to their home countries. Encourage your friends to vote, and let them know about taking their ballots to the consulate.

Report passes **99%** in favour:

Votes for	98
Votes Against	1
Abstain	4.5

3. Motions

I. Protecting Student Workers from Brexit

- **No questions**

Motion passes **96.1%** in favour:

Votes for	98
Votes Against	4
Abstain	1.5

II. EU Support a People's Vote

- **Question 1 [James PhD student]:** I'm speaking now on behalf of Young Green party. We strongly support this motion. Technically Scotland have voted on remaining in the EU twice and voted in favour both times. The Students' Association should not be complacent as Scottish Universities rely heavily on the EU.
- **Question 2 [Richard Weir]:** Given the final agreement hasn't been announced yet, surely this is anti-democratic? I think it's very snobby to say to all the people who voted leave in the country that they were wrong. Similarly, I think it would be disgraceful if MPs say to their electorate that they were wrong.
- **Comment 2 [Oona Miller]:** I think the last comment is quite unsound. It rests on the presumption that the idea of a People's Vote is looking to reverse the decision of the 2016 referendum which is not the case. The deal they have been handed is substantially different to the one they voted on back in 2016, and so the public should be given a chance to hold it to account.
- **Speech against [Robert Weir]** Democracy isn't about getting what you want. It would not be following convention for the public to have another vote on the referendum.
- **Speech for [Jordan Dowd, Activities rep]:** Nothing new to be said about the importance of this motion which hasn't already been highlighted. The final deal should be held to account by the public.
- **Speech Against [Daniel King, Law UG Rep]:** The motion is very much skewed towards voting remain. We don't know what the 52% were voting for when they voted leave. We can't speak for them and say that they were lied to, and that they didn't know what they were voting for. There is a huge amount of dissatisfaction with politics currently, and I think another vote would only enhance this.



- **Summation:** Labour party policy was changed last month. This motion is about having a say on the final deal. We need to have a say, it's important.

Motion passes **88.1%** in favour:

Votes for	77.5
Votes Against	10.5
Abstain	14

III. Support for the University and College Union (UCU) Claim to the University of Edinburgh Management

- **Question 1:** Does this also apply to laboratory demonstrators?
- **Answer 1:** Yes, it applies to all. We hope the UCU claim will bring greater consistency in the treatment of all staff and stuffs across the University.

Motion passes **94.8 %** in favour:

Votes for	90.5
Votes Against	5
Abstain	5.5

IV. Zero Tolerance for Sexual Harassment at the Students' Association

- **Question 1 [Lauren, HCA Rep]:** I was sexually harassed when working as a bar manager at the Fringe. I didn't get any support when it came to pursuing the perpetrator in court, which made the situation even more difficult. I was wondering if any additional support for victims was going to be included in the policy?
- **Answer 1 [Esme]:** Thank you for sharing that. We will definitely be exploring ways for students to access greater support for dealing with sexual harassment. Although it isn't explicitly stated in the motion, it will absolutely be included in the policy.
- **Question 2 [Vivek, PhD Student]:** What specific training will society committee members receive to deal with cases of sexual harassment? Will they be trained to deal with cases of sexual harassment when the offender is not a student, or cases of sexual harassment that occur at venues not on campus?
- **Answer 2 [Kai]:** That's a very good point. This year, at least one committee member from each society and club (about 600 students) has been given training on this, so it is something we are actively working on. We are also having discussions about non-student members. The Activities Office in Potterrow is able to help societies with any problems they might have, including sexual harassment cases.
- **Summation:** As Women's Officer, I have done a lot of work looking into this. 62% of women have experienced sexual harassment on campus, which is simply not acceptable. I hope this helps you understand why we need a Zero Tolerance policy.

Motion passes **98.5%** in favour:



Representation & Democracy

Votes for	95.5
Votes Against	1.5
Abstain	2.5

V. Improving Transport to and from Kings' Buildings (KB)

- **Question 1 [Alejandro, Biological Sciences UG Rep]:** I agree with the motion. Would this change the cost of the shuttle bus? Have we been able to collect data on how many students actually use the shuttle bus? The motion is asking for quite a lot. What would be the priority, getting more busses running between campus and KB, or getting an additional stop in Pollock and Marchmont?
- **Answer 1:** Concerning the cost, I don't know. There needs to be a conversation with the University because they control the budget for this. And the second point of the motion is that the Students' Association needs to do this research in order to develop a more long term plan for transport to and from King's Buildings. The priority is the frequency of the buses, and then when this is sorted, we would look at additional route stops.
- **Question 2 [Shay on behalf of Music Student]:** Students at Allison house also have to travel to King's Buildings. It's not just a science and engineering problem, but also affects students from the School of Art.
- **Answer 2:** That is a good point. I hope this shows that actually this motion is applicable to even more students.
- **Question 3 [Hannah, Activities Rep]:** For people with sensory issues, it is a very stressful experience queuing and getting on the bus. If the University and the Students' Association wants to become more accessible, this is something that should be considered.
- **Answer 3:** Thanks for bringing this up.
- **Eleri:** the inefficiency of the KB shuttle bus is something which affects a lot of students. Even if you will never ever use that bus, I'd urge you to think about your fellow students and how this motion will make a big difference to their student experience.

Motion passes **100%** in favour:

Votes for	99.5
Votes Against	0
Abstain	0

4. Extraordinary Motion

I. Representing Trans and Non-Binary Students

- **Question 1 [Robert Weir]:** Should we get a male representative officer? Males have issues too, such as not talking about their mental health and the rate of suicide for men is significantly higher. Maybe we could use this motion to discuss other students in the University who do not have a dedicated representative.
- **Answer 1:** Men's mental health is certainly an issue. This motion is about a Trans Officer. If you want to bring a motion to council about installing a Male Rep, then please feel free to do so.
- **Question 2 [Elliot, Pride Soc Rep]:** My initial thought when reading this motion was 'why is this necessary?' But then I had two horrible weeks in the lead up the GRA consultation deadline, it was extremely stressful trying to raise awareness of the consultation and educate students about why



Representation & Democracy

it is important. The amount of work that needs to be done on LGBT+ issues is too much for one person or society, and that is why we need a dedicated Officer.

- **Answer 2:** I can imagine that was a lot of work. Thank you for sharing.
- **Question 3 [Alejandro, Biological Sciences UG Rep]:** For context, how many trans or non-binary students do we have at the University? I'm asking so we can get some context on how many people this officer would be representing.
- **Answer 3:** Good question. The university does not collect this information at the moment, so I unfortunately do not have these kind of figures. It is clear from the activities of Pride Soc and other groups, that more people are feeling open to identifying as trans and non-binary. We should respond to this by having a Trans and Non-Binary Officer so that they feel like they have a voice on campus.
- **Ruby [Speech in favour]:** This is a very important motion because as a non-binary student I can say that often we don't feel like we have our own space. Having another Officer to work on this issue is hugely important for starting to deal with our own issues.

Motion passes **97.4%** in favour:

Votes for	94
Votes Against	2.5
Abstain	3

Meeting close

Total number of ballots from students: **27**

Total number of ballots from elected representatives: **51**

Total number of ballots: **78**