Student Council

Thursday 21 February 2019, 6 – 8 pm, Teviot Debating Hall

AGENDA

1. Welcome

2. Accountability
    Paper A

3. Motions
    i.   '#LetsTalk About Men's Mental Health'
            Paper B
    ii.   'Take A Stance On Cyber-Safety '
            Paper C
    iii.   '10% Discount for Returning Postgraduate Students'
            Paper D
    iv.   'Mental Health Awareness Slides'
            Paper E

3. Motions

      i.   '#LetsTalk about Men's Mental Health'
Paper B

What will we do:

1. Recognise that male suicide is the single biggest killer of men under 45 in the UK and work to ensure that any stigma around male depression is eradicated from campus by:
    a. Giving particular focus to men's mental health in its mental health awareness campaigns and related initiatives;
    b. Offering additional support to student groups campaigning to tackle mental health stigma among men;
    c. Lobbying the University for specialised mental health services for men;
2. Recognise that the Vice President Welfare's remit requires advocating for those students with particular mental health needs and experiences, including men.

Background to this:

1. Mental health issues are increasingly affecting our student population: "the number of students seeking help for their mental health at the University of Edinburgh doubled over five years", with over 3,000 students seeking help annually in 2017 (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-45990384), this increased again in 2017-18 with 4,004 students seeking help, of these students only 29% seeking help identified as male (Page 6 - https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/scs_annual_report_2017-18.pdf).
2. In 2017, 5,821 suicides were registered in the UK, with men being three times more likely to take their own lives than women (https://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/suicide_statistics_report_2018.pdf).
3. Suicide is the biggest killer of men in the UK under 45 (https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/suicide/).
4. Men are a lot less likely to access psychological therapies that women, with only 36% of referrals being men (https://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/key-data-mental-health).

Beliefs and motivating actions:

1. Mental ill health in men can be a taboo subject in the UK, with many men suffering from sadness, loneliness or anxiety but unable to ask for help.
2. Societal constructions of manhood and masculinity teach men that they should be 'tough' and 'fearless', and that they are not men if they show 'weakness' such as struggling with mental health or asking for help (https://www.safeline.org.uk/mens-mental-health-a-silent-crisis/).
3. It is important for the Students' Association to campaign for and with men on this issue through existing structures.

ii.   'Take a Stance on Cyber-Safety'
Paper C

What will we do:

1. Incorporate disciplinary procedures for electronic harassment and bullying into the new Students' Association Discipline structure.
2. Lobby the Activities Executive to include electronic harassment in the Societies Code of Conduct.
3. Lobby the Sports Union to include electronic harassment in the Sports Code of Conduct.

Background to this:

1. There has been a significant increase in the amount of time young adults spend online – people are on average online for 24 hours a week, twice as long as 10 years ago. (https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/01/decade-smartphones-now-spend-entire-day-every-week-online/).
2. A study in 2018 found that 41% of women and 22% of men have experienced online sexual harassment and 43% of young people have reported that they have been bullied online. (http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/resources/2018-national-sexual-abuse-report/). (https://gettinggenz.com/2016/12/20/gen-z-unplugged-cyber-bullying/)
3. 73% of teenagers have access to a smartphone or devices with connection to the internet, and so our incoming students are a lot more digitally advanced than ever before. This means that everything is beginning to move from in-person interaction, to online interaction, including harassment, and so we need to be proactive when it comes to online safety, not reactive. (https://gettinggenz.com/2016/12/20/gen-z-unplugged-cyber-bullying/)

Beliefs and motivating actions:

1. With an increasing amount of time spent online, students are more likely to encounter electronic harassment.
2. All students have the right to a safe and secure environment, on campus, at home and online. Creating a safe space for our students is incredibly important.
3. To protect our students against online harassment it makes sense to have clear policy against it in the disciplinary procedure

Submitted by Association Executive

iii. '10% Discount For Returning Postgraduate Students'
Paper D

What will we do:
1. Lobby the University to give Postgraduate students, who did not complete their Undergraduate course at Edinburgh University, a 10% discount if they want to pursue a further degree at the University.

Background to this:
1. Undergraduate and Visiting students receive a 10% discount on their fee as alumni if they pursue further degrees at the university. Current Policy: https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/fees-finance/tuition/discounts?fbclid=IwAR2rnvZzhcx0ZNek9nDvdj69bBrOsLh-ZEFOjHdBIwnG6zlI-Yb6Jizs-s4
2. In 2017-18 the University was comprised of 37% Postgraduate Students, yet they aren't being afforded the same access to the graduate discount. (http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/gasp/factsheet/Student_Factsheet_31072018.pdf)

Beliefs and motivating actions:
1. Postgraduate students are alumni and shouldn't be discriminated against if they didn't do their undergraduate degree at Edinburgh University but want to complete a further degree.
2. The University continues to promote itself to International students, and plans to continue growing Postgraduate student numbers, even 10% discount for us returning students would be a big deal.
3. After speaking to around 100 students, there is support for the graduate discount to be extended.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures

iv.   'Mental Health Awareness Slides'
Paper E

What will we do:

1. Lobby the university to include information about support services in all introductory lectures, across all years and courses. Work in conjunction with the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures to make slides more accessible to our international students.
2. Lobby the University to update its website so links to support services are more easily accessible.
3. Include details of mental health services in welcome packs sent to all students, and distribute leaflets in student halls.

Background to this:

1. Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will suffer a mental health problem every year.[1]
2. Edinburgh ranked 117th out of 122 Universities for Student Satisfaction in the Complete University Guide, improved mental health awareness and support could improve student satisfaction scores and ultimately the University's rankings[2].
3. For 65% of students it took more than 1 week to access counselling, and for 36% of students it took more than 4 weeks. With 1 in 3 waiting roughly a month to speak to someone, improved knowledge of other resources would help sustain students who need help. Further to this, the number of students seeking counselling for mental health at Edinburgh University doubled over 5 years from 2012/13 to 2016/17, increasing by a further 13% last year to 3,398 referrals. [3]
4. Overall usage of the Student Counselling Service was 4,004 people over 2017/18, 9.7% of the student population. This shows high demand for good support services, however there is a reduced knowledge of other services the University provides, e.g. the Feeling Good App, reaching less than 2% of Edinburgh Students in 2017/18.

Beliefs and motivating actions:

1. University can be an incredibly stressful time for many students, and fundamental pastoral services the University provides are not clearly conveyed to students which is detrimental to the effectiveness of such services.
2. Dissolving the stigma surrounding mental health by rooting the conversation in class, reinforcing and illustrating to students that university staff acknowledge and understand pressures put on students during their academic life.

---

[1] https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems/#one)
[2] https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings?r=Scotland
[3] https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/scs_annual_report_2017-18.pdf

3. Leaving home can be daunting, especially for international students. The University has a duty of care to students, and to help promote a wider sense of community wellbeing.