Student Council
Thursday 25th March 2021, 18:00-20:00 (GMT), Microsoft Teams

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Agenda

Welcome

Sabbatical Officer Accountability:

Accessibility Break

Motions - TBC

Affiliations

Any Other Business (AOB)

Staff Directory: who to ask for help during the meeting

- Democracy Regulations and General Questions: Sarah Moffat
- If you do not wish to be recorded: Dan Doyle
- Tech support: Sarah Connet
- Voting Questions: Stuart Lamont
- Wellbeing and Safe Space: Laura Smith
Paper A: Accountability

Ellen MacRae, President

I’ve taken quite a bit of annual leave this month for moving flats and campaigning in the student elections! Despite this, I’ve still been involved in working groups and conversations with the University about plans for the next academic year. With the recent announcements, I’m remaining optimistic that we’re continuing to move towards some kind of new ‘normal’.

In line with my manifesto, over the month of March, I’ve also:

Accessibility

- Been in discussions with University Accommodation about their Rent Strategy and prioritising keeping our cheapest accommodation and family flats affordable.
- With Niamh, VP Welfare, ensured that over £2million was secured for a Covid-19 discretionary funding with a focus to support those who are experiencing financial hardship; are unable to break their leases or need to travel back to Edinburgh for their studies.

Change

- Presented at the Edinburgh Futures Conversations: Future of Health event (hosted by EFI and Global Health Academy) and prepared our challenge statement to the University in which students have outlined six key areas to advance global health.
- Started planning work for the end of term to celebrate being a European University!

Transparency

- Following a motion from Edinburgh University Amnesty International representatives, that passed at January's Student Council, the Students' Association has now signed the Future of Life LAWs pledge which "call[s] upon governments and government leaders to create a future with strong international norms, regulations and laws against lethal autonomous weapons."
- Met with our newly elected Rector, Debora Kayembe, to introduce them to the Students’ Association and our work this year. I’m very much looking forward to working with Debora over the year.

Looking forward I will have more time to carry forward the actions of more of your Student Council motions and have already started conversations with the right members of University staff.

Finally, I just want to add my thanks for your support and engagement with Student Council over a really challenging year and a huge congratulations to everyone who ran in our student elections! I feel really fortunate to be able to stay on as your Students’ Association President to continue assisting our recovery from the impacts of Covid-19. I’ve adored being part of this year’s Sabbatical Officer team and I’m really looking forward to start working with your 2021/22 team at the start of June.

As always, please get in touch whenever you need – president@eusa.ed.ac.uk Twitter - @EdUniPresident
Rachel Irwin, VP Activities & Services

Firstly, I’d like to take a moment to congratulate all our newly elected student representatives (hoping to see lots of you at Council!). This year saw unprecedented obstacles to traditional campaigning that all our candidates were able to overcome with such style and innovation – it was amazing to see! Well done to all that ran for a position!

Since we last met, your fellow Sabbs and I have dedicated a fair bit of time to preparing for our handover to our successors so they can transition smoothly into their new roles come the summer – I know, time flies!

University

- I had the pleasure of being part of the University’s Student Experience Grant application panel, where I learned of some of the fantastic work and inventive projects being done by our students across the University, and help fund these.
- I’ve continued to sit on the Study Spaces working group, which meets less frequently now, but has recently permitted the re-opening of study space at 40 George Square. I’d like to remind students that I’m always happy to be contacted to hear any feedback you have on study spaces.
- I sat on the University’s Network Replacement Project Board, one of the University’s biggest investments into IT infrastructure that aims to implement a bigger, stronger and more flexible network for students and staff.

Student Groups

- I co-hosted a Society Office Bearer Forum alongside our fantastic Activities Representatives, where we heard about societies’ experiences of this year and hopes for next year, covering topics ranging from COVID-19 to room bookings.
- I’ve been part of the Association’s COVID-19 Impact Research Project where I was able to undertake a 1:1 consultation myself with one of our societies to hear about the impacts of the pandemic on their group and their opinions on the support we provided for them, to decipher what lessons can be learned.
- I also sat on two Student Awards panels this month, and it was really heart-warming and inspiring to read the many nominations we had describing the hard work and dedication of so many students and student groups this year.

Manifesto

- VP Community, Amanda and I convened our first Sustainability Working Group meeting where we reviewed our newly-created Sustainability Policy with Association staff, and created various action points (including those mentioned in my manifesto!). We have also created an MS Form for our students to give input on this so keep an eye out for this!
- Quick shout-out to our Match-Up Catch-Up scheme which is still running to facilitate 1:1 meet-ups for students that haven’t managed to meet many new people this year - check it out! We’ve had around 140 sign-ups so far!
- I am continuing to research and compile opportunities for the My Funding Page I am planning for the Association’s new website. Due to other timelines with the new site, I’m hoping this will be launched later on in the semester in time for the next academic year.
Amanda Scully, VP Community

Just to say thank you everyone who has attended Student Council this year, you all have been incredibly proactive and engaged and I’m sad it’s the last one for me. Also, a huge congratulations to all our new elected representatives, especially our newly elected Vice President Community Beth! The team and I have already started handover preparation but lots of work still being done on my manifesto and objectives. As always if you have any questions or want to bring anything up email me at vpcommunity@eusa.ed.ac.uk.

Addressing the Climate Emergency

- Rachel (VPAS) and I chaired the first Sustainability Working Group within the Students’ Association and these meetings will now be happening monthly. We gained feedback on our Sustainability Policy and are working on solidifying and prioritizing the sustainability actions we can take, and we also sent out a form for students to give input on the policy. Rachel and I are working to get the policy finished and approved by Trustees in the Association in May.
- Lots of questions around divestment from last Student Council and talks of next steps, since then I’ve attended a People & Planet open meeting to discuss next steps with student activists, have brought up thoughts around Barclays and Amazon to the Director of Finance at the University, and am working with the SRS department on events and workshops around Responsible Investment.
- I’ve continued working with the student Ecosia campaign and have worked on a paper to go forward to the Information Services Group at the university as to why Ecosia should be made the default browser at the University.
- Continuing work on encouraging student engagement in COP26 in the fall.

Housing

- Entered negotiations with Ellen (Pres) and the Accommodation, Catering, and Events (ACE) department at the university around accommodation prices next year and was able to argue for keeping returning and family accommodation as well as the cheapest accommodation price band affordable.
- Have been working on creating support for students who are flat hunting, I created a video with tips for students and did an Instagram takeover where I was able to answer students’ questions around accommodation.
- Continued working with Rent Justice Edinburgh to promote their campaign and bring forward their demands with Senior University staff.
- Met our new University Rector, Debora Kayembe, and specifically brought up issues around accommodation that students have been experiencing this year.

Other Stuff

- Sat on two Student Awards Panels this month and was so impressed and inspired by all the nominations this year and the incredibly inspiring work of our students during a challenging year.
- Scottish Parliamentary elections are coming up and I am working on helping students vote and to see how parties and candidates are addressing student issues. Register to vote!
Fizzy Abou Jawad, VP Education

In the month since our last Student Council I have held our penultimate School Rep Forum, where Tina Harrison Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance was in attendance. School Reps were able to discuss with her your concerns around the package of measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on assessment as well as other concerns you have been escalating to them about your academic year. I have also spent time in the last month preparing and planning for the handover period with your newly elected Vice President Education. The motions that passed at Student Council and are my responsibility are the ECA Complaints letter, at the time of writing I am planning to meet with motion proposer so that we are able to jointly write a letter to The University portraying The Student’s Association. I am also leading on the Graduations motion, so have been in touch with the Director of Student Systems and Administrations and she is supportive of the motion. The University has confirmed they will provide in-person celebrations for any cohort of students that missed their graduation, the proposals will come to 2021/22 planning committee where myself, Ellen (Pres) and Niamh (VPW) all have a seat, thus allowing student input into any plans put forward. Finally, the motion regarding international fees has been taken up by all the sabbatical officers and we have started to think about how we can create a task force of students to progress with the motion. Outside of the motions, I have made progress on my priorities for this year.

Improving Teaching and Learning

- Joined a new working group along with Ellen (Pres) and Niamh (VPW) looking at 2021/22 planning
- Held second School Rep Forum of this Semester, with Prof Tina Harrison in attendance
- Joined Study and Work Away working group to pass on students concerns with mandatory and optional year abroad for next academic year
- Invited to join curriculum transformation board
- Next Steps: Ensure curriculum transformation proceeds with student feedback at the forefront of decision making

Academic Student Support

- Continued campaign on academic integrity
- Feedback from school reps has suggested SSLC guidance would be useful for representatives
- Chaired taught college SSLC at CSE where we discussed ways to improve wellbeing of students, sense of community and how best to get feedback from students
- School reps were able to directly pass on student feedback to Prof Tina Harrison at the School Rep Forum
- Next Steps: Investigate if we should invite peer learning and support volunteers to SSLCs too

Inclusive and accessible learning experience

- Passed on feedback to study spaces working group regarding release time of bookings
- Panellist on the feminist classroom panel on International Women’s Day
Niamh McClean, VP Welfare

This month has been so busy with the elections, and a huge congratulations to Aisha, who has been elected as the new VP Welfare for 2021-2022. Here’s my final update, as well as my future plans!

Making Edinburgh equal, diverse and inclusive

- I am working with HR to monitor future recruitment and employment processes in the Students’ Association, in order to reflect on where we may be failing in recruiting diverse applicants. I hope to also lobby the university HR department to do the same, to identify trends and increase diversity in our institution.
- Secured budget for a PhD intern to develop a LEARN module on the EDI resources I have developed, making an interactive training module that can be worked into pre-matriculation!
- Participated in the Toilet Consultation on behalf of the Students’ Association, to promote appropriate toilet provisions for trans and non-binary students, and prevent gender monitoring.
- Reformed the Dignity at Work policy and procedure within the Students’ Association to recognise purposely misgendering colleagues as a form of bullying and harassment.

Facilitating healthy lifestyles

- Conducted a final consultation on the Report and Support platform, going live at the end of March. This has been a very long process, but I have ensured the platform asks appropriate questions in order to give a student the most tailored support, whilst also collecting data, and allowing for anonymous reporting.
- Successfully lobbied for the University to increase counselling sessions offered to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, allowing for extended support and further healing
- Secured budget for an instagram giveaway (£50 etsy voucher!) to encourage students to sign up to Consent Collective TV, a great resource from students who have experienced GBV or have suffered from trauma in learning to heal. Keep your eyes peeled on instagram!

Alleviating financial worries

- Successfully launched the COVID Winter fund, which will award thousands of students with financial support of up to £1,500 in they have struggled financially, or are paying for a term-time address in Edinburgh and have been unable to return.
- Began an investigation into the University change in bursary awards, including tracking financial hardship of students who access bursaries and still experience financial hardship (in having to access emergency loans or the hardship fund) so lobby the university to increase bursaries.

Regarding safety concerns

- I am working with our Women’s Officer, Amanda VPC Scully, and the University Crime Prevention Officer on how we can make our city safer for all. We are going to work with the local council and Police Scotland to create appropriate actions to ensure the safety of all our staff and students. I will also work with Equally Safe Scotland committee and the Violence against Women partnership board to lobby the Council for real change.
Paper B: Extraordinary Motion to create Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research School Representatives

Note: All Extraordinary Motions must pass with 66% or more of votes in favour at two consecutive Student Council meetings. Extraordinary Motions which pass for the first time this month will need to pass for a second time at the September 2021 meeting of Student Council. Changes to the Students’ Association’s Democracy Regulations also require the approval of the Trustee Board whose membership is made up of the five Sabbatical Officers, four student Trustees, and three external Trustees.

What we will do

1. Make the following amendments to the Students’ Association’s Student Democracy Regulations:
   a. Amend 1.3.2.6 to “A Postgraduate Taught Representative for each School;”
   b. Add 1.3.2.7 reading “A Postgraduate Research Representative for each School.”
   c. Amend 2.1.5.1 to “A Postgraduate Taught Representative for each School;”
   d. Insert after 2.1.5.1 “A Postgraduate Research Representative for each School;”
   e. Amend 2.2.1.2 to “Only Postgraduate Taught students in a given School shall be eligible to stand to be its Postgraduate Taught School Representative, and only Postgraduate Research students in a given School shall be eligible to stand to be its Postgraduate Research School Representative.”

Background to this

1. Currently, each School has an Undergraduate School Representative and a Postgraduate School Representative.
2. While both Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students are eligible to stand for the Postgraduate School Representative role, the majority of Postgraduate School Representatives are Postgraduate Taught students.
3. It can be challenging for Postgraduate Taught students to represent Postgraduate Research students as they generally do not have first-hand experience of being a Research student, and there are a range of issues which are unique to Research students which Taught students do not experience.
4. Research students are underrepresented in the wider cohort of Elected and Programme Representatives.

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. The Students’ Association must ensure it is representing all its members, including Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students.
2. Splitting the existing Postgraduate School Representative role into two roles, one representing Postgraduate Taught students and one representing Postgraduate Research students, will ensure that both cohorts of Postgraduate students have a voice within the Students’ Association.

Paper C: Extraordinary motion to provide Student Council a mechanism to recall Sabbatical Officers

Note: The current process to remove a Sabbatical Officer from their role as a Trustee of the Students’ Association is outlined in section 11 of the Articles of Association, available at http://bit.ly/eduniarticlesofassociation. Sections 10.3 and 10.6 are also relevant.

What we will do

1. Provide Student Council a mechanism to recall Sabbatical Officers.
2. Allow students to cast a Motion of No Confidence in a Sabbatical Officer at Student Council, submitted in a similar way to Ordinary Motions (namely requiring 20 signatures);
   a. If successful (at the 66% threshold) this Motion of No Confidence would trigger an Online Ballot which, if successful, would result in the Sabbatical Officer in question being removed from office effective immediately, and an Acting Sabbatical Officer would be appointed by the Students’ Association up until such a time as a by-election could be held.
   b. A Motion of No Confidence which receives less than 66% of votes in favour would fail, with no further action taking place.
   c. The precise detail of the process, and in particular the threshold of participation required for the Online Ballot to be binding, would be developed in consultation and collaboration with students.
3. Remove existing mechanisms for the removal of a Sabbatical Officer.

Background to this

1. At present, under Article 10.6 of the Student Association’s Articles of Association, Sabbatical Officers can be removed as Trustees via a Motion of No Confidence submitted to a General Meeting of the Association this requires a petition with 150 signatures, and is then decided at this Meeting.
2. This process does not incorporate an Online Ballot or Referendum, and is not widely known, potentially limiting participation to those actively engaged in the democratic running of the Association.
3. The requirement to procure 150 signatures is a very challenging amount to reach (possibly egregiously so), and limits the accessibility of the current procedure for removal. Conducting an Online Ballot, with the additional ability of the Association to reach the student body, would bring greater engagement.
4. This process takes place independently of Student Council, which as a body partially exists to hold Sabbatical Officers to account.
5. Other Student Unions, such as those of the University of Oxford and Trinity College Dublin, allow Sabbatical Officers to be removed or impeached by a referendum or online ballot triggered at a Council meeting (or their equivalent thereof), so there is precedent for this streamlining of the process.
Beliefs and motivating actions

1. The ability of Student Council to impose checks and balances which are required for a truly democratic body, and to recall Sabbatical Officers, is curtailed by the existing process which is inaccessible and not widely known about.

2. The process by which Sabbatical Officers are removed is opaque, unwieldy, and antequated – simplifying it by marrying it to existing procedures in Student Council would aid transparency.

3. By allowing a singular Motion to be submitted, explicitly calling for removal, and invoking terminology with which the wider student body will be familiar in doing so, the process of removing a Sabbatical Officer would be streamlined and more obvious and accessible.

4. That it triggers an online ballot would also prevent a Sabbatical Officer being removed, and all the chaos and disruption this would cause, without this being the prevailing will of the entire student community.

5. Streamlining the process by which Sabbatical Officers deemed by the broader student body to be not fulfilling their role to an acceptable standard would provide greater transparency to the role, and would be more effective in ensuring that Sabbatical Officers are answerable to the entire student community, rather than just the subset actively engaged with the Students’ Association. This would also increase accessibility and drive further engagement in the Students’ Association’s democratic procedures by the wider student community.

6. This Motion would also increase the ability of Student Council to be an effective balance against the (not-inconsiderable) power with which Sabbatical Officers are entrusted upon their election.

7. Providing an explicit, straight-forward, and malleable procedure for recall would aid the transparency and visibility of the Students’ Association, make the wider student community feel more engaged with the Association, provide greater protection for students against the risk of a poor or inadequate Sabbatical Officers, and ensure that the Students’ Association is a truly democratic body.

Submitted by Dáire Byrne with 40 signatures.

Paper D: Extraordinary motion to introduce a cloture vote at Student Council meetings

What we will do

1. Make a procedural change to the way in which Motions are discussed at Student Council by introducing a cloture vote.

2. Have the Facilitator hold a brief cloture vote prior to introducing a Motion; if a majority of attendees support this cloture vote (with the threshold defining majority to be at the discretion of the Facilitator), the Motion in question will not be discussed within the meeting, with the usual introduction, questions, and speeches in favour and against not taking place.

3. Progress to the next item set for discussion in the agenda following a successful cloture vote; the Motion which underwent cloture would still be voted upon as usual.
4. Encourage students who have lingering questions to contact the individual(s) who proposed the Motion for further detail to make an informed voting decision.

Background to this

1. Many legislative assemblies allow for cloture of a Motion, meaning that any discussion of that proposal ceases and it is voted upon immediately.
2. The rationale behind this is to save time – if a Motion’s outcome is deemed to be inevitable, discussing it further is a waste of the assembly’s time, and prevents it from committing more time to more contentious matters.
3. Cloture also prevents bad actors from engaging in obstructionist tactics by needlessly prolonging debate.
4. Motions submitted to the Student Council are made available in advance of the meeting, and attendees are expected to have engaged with them prior to the meeting.

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. For particularly well-supported or strongly opposed Motions, further elaboration and debate is redundant, as the outcome of the vote is a foregone conclusion.
2. Cloture would allow this irrelevant debate, demanded at present by bureaucratic procedure, to be avoided.
3. Not discussing Motions which are deemed to have wide support would allow more time to be allotted to more divisive Motions.
4. Cloture would also reduce the length of time Student Council meetings take, thereby making them more accessible and less of a time-commitment, allowing a larger amount of students to participate.
5. Cloture would, in short, represent a minor procedural change which would do away with some tedious and unnecessary bureaucratic formalities, rendering the meetings more accessible and facilitating lengthier discussions where they are more urgently required.

Submitted by Dáire Byrne with 40 signatures.

Paper E: Extraordinary Motion to provide Student Council attendees an option to refer a Motion to Online Ballot

What we will do

1. Amend the voting process for Motions brought to Student Council by adding an additional option, labelled “Refer to Ballot”.
2. Advise attendees to vote on the Motion as usual (either voting for, against, or abstaining), and then allow a separate and additional choice to vote to “Refer to Ballot”.
3. Should a simple majority of students who voted on the Motion select this option to “Refer to Ballot”, irrespective of the tally of the votes cast on the Motion itself, the Motion would automatically be referred to an online ballot, as is currently the case for Motions which receive between 33% and 66% of votes in favour (this process would remain in place, for Motions on which Student Council could not reach a consensus).
4. Proceed using the existing system in the eventuality that a majority of respondents do not vote to “Refer to Ballot”.
Background to this

1. At present, the only way in which an Ordinary Motion, submitted to Student Council, can be referred to an Online Ballot of the wider student body is if it receives between 33% and 66% approval.

2. However, there are cases, especially Motions which are highly contentious and/or will have a significant impact upon the wider student body, in which attendees (and Elected Representatives particularly) may have strong personal sentiments about the motion, and still believe that it should be sent to Ballot so that the wider student body has more input into deciding its fate.

3. As it stands, if a student wishes to refer a Motion to Ballot, and to thereby involve the wider student body in the decision-making process via direct democracy, there is no straightforward way in which to do so, something which would be desirable.

4. Students seeking a poll of the general student community could alternatively call a Referendum, which can be done either by receiving 500 signatures, successfully passing an Extraordinary Motion at Student Council, or by a two-thirds majority vote of the Association Executive.

5. This Motion would provide a mechanism to Student Council attendees to deliberately involve the general student body in the passage or failure of Ordinary Motions, with a lower threshold to submission than Referenda and while still facilitating regular passage of non-controversial or wide-reaching Motions.

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. Allowing students the ability to recommend that a Motion be referred to Ballot while still allowing them to vote in accordance with their conscience and the will of their constituents resolves this issue, and would afford Student Council attendees greater flexibility and increase the ability of the Student Council to poll the wider student body on contentious and impactful affairs.

2. This Motion, while being a rather minor procedural change, would facilitate more direct democracy, allowing Student Council to deliberately refer matters which are under heavy debate or are of sizeable impact to the student community as a whole.

3. By facilitating more direct democracy where it is deemed necessary, the Student Council would be better informed as to wider student feelings about Motions, and could act with more transparency.

4. It would also afford more students the opportunity to participate in the democratic procedures of the Students’ Association, and would spare Elected Representatives the challenge of having to reconcile personal opinions towards a motion with the desire of the students they represent.

Submitted by Dáire Byrne with 40 signatures.
Paper F: Extraordinary motion to allow the formation of Specific Interest Panels by Elected Representatives

What we will do

1. Create a designation within Student Council, dubbed “Specific Interest Panels”, on which named Elected Representatives who had a specific shared interest would serve.
2. Encourage Elected Representatives who have a shared specific interest to group together and form a Specific Interest Panel via submission and subsequent passage of an Ordinary Motion at Student Council – if passed, the Panel would be formed and invested with the powers listed below.
3. Invest in these “Specific Interest Panels” the following powers;
   a. A Panel would have the ability to introduce Motions pertaining to their specific interest directly, without having to procure the prerequisite signatures.
   b. Motions submitted by a Panel would require only a simple majority to pass.
4. Motions submitted by a Panel would be exempt from the current Online Ballot system for motions which receive between 33 and 66% votes in favour, and would be introduced and regarded on a pass-fail basis.
5. Provide Student Council the ability to dissolve an existing Specific Interest Panel and divest its members of these powers by way of an Ordinary Motion; provide the Association Executive with similar powers of oversight and dissolution.

Background to this

1. At present, Elected Representatives must go about submitting Motions to Student Council much in the same way as other students.
2. Even if the Representative submits a motion pertaining specifically to the role into which they were elected through the conventional channels, they still need to proceed with the usual process to have it adopted, which can prove time-consuming.
3. Moreover, Elected Representatives who have overlapping interests do not currently have an easy mechanism to work together within the framework of the Student Council.

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. Providing Elected Representatives with a greater degree of autonomy and power within the Student Council would reflect the fact that they serve a subset of the student community, and would allow them to more freely act towards furthering the interests of these subsets.
2. It would also allow Elected Representatives to more swiftly and efficiently represent the students who elected them within the Student Association’s democratic framework, reflective of the fact that the Representative has been entrusted to propose and implement changes on behalf of the students who elected them.
3. Lowering the threshold required to pass these Motions would reflect the expertise and more in-depth knowledge of the Specific Interest Panel in the specific interest which they were formed around, and would facilitate quicker and less time-consuming passage of Motions pertaining to their specific interest.
4. Nevertheless, this Motion would still provide Student Council with direct oversight over the actions and decisions undertaken by these Panels.
5. In all, this Motion would invest in Elected Representatives the ability to more efficiently serve the interests of the community they represent and it would facilitate greater teamwork between Representatives with overlapping areas of interest.

Submitted by Dáire Byrne with 40 signatures.

Paper G: Motion for fast and reliable internet for all

What we will do

1. Lobby the University to upgrade their broadband infrastructure across its estates and especially within their accommodations and university flats to ensure an absolute minimum of 100Mbps speed (both upload and download) is available for all students living in them.
2. Lobby the University to provide financial support to students who could upgrade their broadband to a faster speed but may not currently have the means to do so, where the infrastructure is in place to achieve this.
3. Where students live in remote areas or accommodations that don’t have access to fibre broadband yet, lobby the University to put in place necessary mitigations to account for the lack of good access to online materials and support them in advocating for the infrastructure to be put in place on an urgent basis.

Background to this

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the vast majority of teaching has moved online, and some teaching is highly likely to continue online as a direct legacy of the pandemic for years to come.
2. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology published a note in December 2020 addressing the ‘digital divide’, which is the gap between those with access to digital technologies and those who don’t.
   a. The note’s definition of digital exclusion includes ‘not having access to the required infrastructure’.
   b. The note also finds that, according to the Office for National Statistics, 100% of 16-34 year-olds in the UK use the internet “daily or almost daily” in 2020.¹
3. Online learning has been beneficial for some students, particularly those in our disabled and international communities, and those with additional caring responsibilities.
4. On 4 March 2021, four US Senators, from both sides of the political divide, wrote an open letter to the Biden Administration calling on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to update its standards for high-speed broadband. The letter asks for that standard to change from 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload to 100Mbps in both directions.²

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. A fast and reliable internet connection is proving increasingly necessary for students to fully engage in their studies.
2. Video Conferencing Software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams require a strong and steady broadband connection to be effective tools for students’ education.

3. Disabled Students need to be able to access and participate in their teaching and learning remotely in order to be adequately supported by the University.  

Submitted by Jeremy Pestle with 20 student signatures.

Paper H: Motion for Students' Association presence at King’s Buildings

What we will do

1. Extend the operating hours of key services such as the Advice Place at King’s Buildings, by September 2021.
2. Establish working areas for student-facing Association staff so that services and support that aren’t presently available at King’s Buildings campus can be accessed without students having to travel to George Square.
3. Sabbatical Officers should endeavour to split their week working at different campuses, preferably with one day a week minimum working from King’s Buildings.

Background to this

1. The Advice Place is based primarily at George Square campus and holds a small office at King’s Buildings which is currently open for six hours a week, notwithstanding COVID.
2. Other student-facing teams, including Student Opportunities and Representation and Democracy, are also mostly based at George Square, and have much less presence at King’s Buildings campus.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that existing office spaces have reduced capacity, and this is likely to continue, even once some in-person activity and on-site working resumes.

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. Visibility of the Association’s work across all the University’s campuses is key.
2. Students at King’s Buildings (and other satellite campuses) deserve regular access to Students’ Association support and services without having to travel long distances to George Square, particularly as this travel time could be disruptive to their studies.
3. Having staff based at different campuses around the University would allow the Association to become more resilient in the event of future epidemic measures as more space is made available for key work.

Submitted by Jeremy Pestle with 20 student signatures.

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3 https://www.facebook.com/edifess/posts/1017970995377534
Paper I: Motion for support for student sex workers

What we will do

1. Support student sex workers that are being outed, targeted, faced with prejudice and discrimination or harassed in the university for their status as sex workers.
2. Lobby the University to declare their support for student sex workers and state they will not be penalised for seeking support.
3. Support and signpost students to sex worker-led organisations, such as the English Collective of Prostitutes, SWARM, and SCOT-PEP, who work to improve the lives of sex workers across the UK and beyond.
4. Support and campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work, and campaign against any attempted to introduce the Nordic Model in Scotland and the UK, including but not limited to publishing a statement and running a campaign on social media.
5. Host information for those entering or working in sex work on the Students’ Association’s website.

Background to this

1. Sex work refers (but is not limited to) escorting, lap dancing, stripping, pole dancing, pornography, webcamming, adult modelling, phone sex, and selling sex.
2. Increasing living costs, tuition fees and cuts to grants means it is likely students may choose to enter sex work to fund their studies.5
3. In particular this year, due to the pandemic and reduced access to traditional sources of flexible work, some students may choose to enter online sex work.
4. Whilst sex work is not illegal in the UK, it is still criminalised; sex workers who work on the street can be picked up on soliciting or anti-social behaviour order charges, and sex workers who work together indoors for safety can be charged with brothel keeping.
5. Sex work, particularly full-service sex work, is dangerous; Transgender Europe’s report declares that 62% of murdered trans and gender-diverse people in Europe are sex workers.6
6. A number of international human rights organisations already support the full decriminalization of sex work including Amnesty International, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women; Human Rights Watch; UNAIDS; the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health; Transgender Europe and the NUS Women’s and LGBT+ campaigns.
7. Decriminalisation, as shown in New Zealand, makes the industry safer and improves rights of sex workers, while the ‘Nordic Model’ implemented in Ireland and Norway has been shown to increase the harm sex workers face.8

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. Sex work is work, like any other job; while it is stigmatised and often precarious, it is work that pays the rent, bills, and puts food on the table.

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5 https://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/Student%20Sex%20Work%20Report%202015.pdf
7 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1748895814523024
2. Regardless of the reasons for entering into sex work, sex workers of all backgrounds deserve to have their rights protected.

3. Efforts to criminalise the purchase of sex (known as the ‘Nordic Model’) are often brought forward in the name of anti-trafficking programmes, when in reality they are laws which aim to control what people can and can’t do with their own bodies.

4. Decriminalisation would ensure that sex workers feel able to report unsafe clients or violence at work without the worry of criminal repercussions, and that those who wish to leave the sex industry are not left with criminal records as a result of their job; they can also report suspected cases of trafficking to police without self-incrimination.

5. Criminalising the purchase of sex puts sex workers, especially those who work on the street, in danger, while decriminalisation reduces police abuse, harassment and violence against sex workers.9

Submitted by Lucy Da Costa with 20 student signatures.

Paper J: Edinburgh University Students’ Association Affiliations, March 2021

How do Affiliations work?

Why are we reviewing our affiliations?

Under the Education Act (1994), each year the Students’ Association is required to give all our members the opportunity to review the organisation’s on-going affiliations.

What is the process for reviewing our affiliations?

In-line with this, Association Executive (which is made up of the five Sabbatical Officers) has prepared a paper detailing the Students’ Association’s current affiliations, and their recommendations on each affiliation.

These recommendations will either be to continue to the affiliation or discontinue the affiliation. Where the Officers are recommending an affiliation is discontinued, their reasoning will be outlined below.

At the March meeting of Student Council, members will be asked to vote for or against those recommendations.

These affiliations will also be considered by the Students’ Association’s Trustee Board. Under charities law, the Trustee Board is responsible for ensuring that the Students’ Association has a clear purpose, is operating legally, and is financially viable.

What happens following the review?

If both Student Council and the Trustee Board accept the recommendations of Association Executive then they will be implemented.

9 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58cea5cf197aea5216413671/t/58cec4fc534a59fbd0006a/1489945816430/SWOU+EC+Swedish+Abolitionism_prf03b.pdf
If Student Council and the Trustee Board cannot reach a consensus on the recommendations of Association Executive, then the status quo will remain and the Students’ Association will retain all our existing affiliations.

**What if a student wanted to challenge an affiliation?**

Affiliations can only be overturned by a referendum. A referendum proposal can be submitted in any of the following ways:

- **Directly to Association Executive**: Any member can present a referendum proposal to Association Executive, provided they have the signatures of 500 members
- **Through Student Council**: Any member can submit a referendum proposal by bring an extraordinary motion to Student Council
- **Through Association Executive**: Association Executive can submit a referendum proposal by a two-thirds majority vote

### Students’ Association Affiliations, as of March 25th 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Affiliation Fee</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Union of Students (NUS)</td>
<td>£37,500</td>
<td>Continue affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop Climate Chaos</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Continue affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to Education Campaign</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Continue affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of Birzeit University (FOBZU)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Continue affiliation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**National Union of Students (NUS)**

Affiliation agreed via referendum in 2004

**Affiliation fee**: £37,500

**Organisation website**: [www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

**What is the National Union of Students?**

The National Union of Students (NUS) exists to represent Students’ Unions and their members across the UK. They work at the national level to campaign on issues affecting students and support individual Students’ Unions in their work. They also negotiate purchasing deals on behalf of their members, giving Students’ Unions access to commercial goods and services at a reduced rate.

**Why is Association Executive recommending we continue our affiliation?**

While NUS affiliation costs the Students’ Association over £37,000 each year, there are a range of benefits, most notably a saving of over £100,000 through purchasing deals negotiated by NUS. We also benefit from training, resources, and support throughout the year, and we have the opportunity to shape NUS’ work by sending delegates to national conferences.

The NUS affiliation fee was also significantly reduced last year as a result of a financial review, and the Students’ Association will also be applying for a hardship reduction on our affiliation fee, in light of the impact COVID has had on the Association’s finances.
Stop Climate Chaos

Affiliation agreed by Student Council in 2011

Affiliation fee: none

Organisation website: www.stopclimatechaos.scot/

What is Stop Climate Chaos?

Stop Climate Chaos is a coalition of over 50 organisations in Scotland campaign collectively on climate change. Their key focus is on lobbying the Scottish Government to take “bold action to tackle climate change, with Scotland delivering our fair share of action in response to the Paris Agreement and supporting climate justice around the world.”

Why is Association Executive recommending we continue our affiliation?

Stop Climate Chaos are a registered charity and continue to be active in campaigning on climate change, an issue which we know many of our students are passionate about. The Students’ Association is listed on their members’ page, and as members we are entitled to get involved in any of the working groups which shape their campaign activities.

Right to Education Campaign

Affiliation agreed by General Meeting in 2005

Affiliation fee: none

Organisation website: https://www.birzeit.edu/en/right2edu

What is the Right to Education Campaign?

The Right to Education Campaign is a grassroots movement based at Birzeit University in the West Bank which aims to raise awareness of the issues facing Palestinian students, academics, and institutions, while also lobbying for all Palestinians to have access to education. Historically, the student-led society Students for Justice in Palestine have organised a number of events during Right to Education Week in November to raise awareness of the Right to Education campaign on campus, including in some years hosting students and academics from Birzeit University.

Why is Association Executive recommending we continue our affiliation?

The Right to Education Campaign is still active.

Friends of Birzeit University (FOBZU)

Affiliation agreed by General Meeting in 2005

Affiliation fee: none

Organisation website: https://fobzu.org
What is the Friends of Birzeit?

Friends of Birzeit University (FOBZU) is a grassroots campaign in support of the right to education and its role in the wider development of Palestinian society. They work with partners in Palestine and globally to deliver events, scholarships, and writing residencies.

Why is Association Executive recommending we continue our affiliation?

Friends of Birzeit University is still active and continues to run a number of on-going projects and campaigns.