



## Student Council

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020, 6-8pm, Pleasance: Upper Hall

### AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Accountability  
[Paper A](#)
3. Accessibility Break
4. Motions:  
Solidarity with students in Kashmir and on University campuses in India, submitted by Vivek Santayana  
[Paper B](#)  
Continue Supporting the University staff in their industrial action, submitted by Vivek Santayana  
[Paper C](#)  
Expenditure Request: Supporting UCU industrial action, submitted by Association Exec  
[Paper D](#)  
Create a Section Representative post for Students who commute to University, submitted by Jeremy Pestle  
[Paper E](#)  
Expenditure request: Pilot to Provide High-Fidelity Noise-Cancelling Earplugs for Students with Hearing Needs to Compensate for Ambient Noise in Students' Association Venues, submitted by Vivek Santayana  
[Paper F](#)
5. Any Other Business (AOB)  
Lapsing Policy  
Shout outs



## Paper A: Accountability Reports

### Report from Andrew Wilson, President

As your Students' Association President, I represent the interests of students to the University and beyond, as well as leading your Students' Association to be a relevant and representative union for its members. Here's what I've been up to recently:

#### Getting In and Getting On

Throughout my year in office, I have been championing the idea that each and every student, regardless of background, should be able to access the University of Edinburgh and get in to education, but also get on whilst they're here, making the most of their University experience with the best support available to them.

- I spoke to hundreds of students across Easter Bush, Kings' Buildings and George Square to hear their ideas about how we can make Edinburgh a more affordable place to live as a student. I will now start to collate this information, as well as having conversations with our elected representatives to hear their ideas and thoughts of affordability in Edinburgh.
- I attended University Court and Accommodation Programme Board, raising issues such as affordable accommodation for students and the need for a strategic approach to this issue, as well as the issue of adapting accommodation to suit the needs of our students who are parents, carers or in long-term relationships.

#### A Relevant Students' Association

Our Students' Association must be relevant to student life and representative of all our members which is why I have:

- Organised a successful Sexual Health and Guidance Week for students to talk openly about sex and their sexual health. We ran outreach stalls across University campuses, engaging and interesting events and workshops that were well attended and set up sexual health testing drop-ins that were oversubscribed. I will now begin to evaluate the week and work out which areas of the week can be sustained throughout the year!
- This month, #Beefgate featured heavily! I worked with Students' Association staff to ensure that as many students as possible were able to have their say in this cross-campus ballot, and nearly 6,000 of you did!

#### Students as Changemakers

As students, we have the power to shape local and national decisions and the future of our University, here's what I've been doing to facilitate that:

- I have been meeting with several potential candidates who were considering standing in the Students' Association Elections to talk about the role of President and imparting my campaigning tips and tricks.
- This month I was involved in several shortlisting exercises to bring a student perspective to University decision making. I input into the Senior Lay Member and Director of Accommodation, Catering and Events recruitment processes, as well as shortlisted finalists for the University's 'Being Edinburgh' award.
- Following the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, I have been working closely with UNA Europa in their efforts to create a truly European university. I attended their Project Steering Committee and met with colleagues at our University to talk about how we can involve as many students as possible in this project.



## Report from Beth Fellows, Vice President Activities and Services

### Increase Participation and Communication

- Continuing with my work on Wednesday afternoons, I am now gathering research on the Postgraduate experience of this and how easy they find it to access extra-curricular activities on campus. It appears that Postgraduates often have full timetables and can't commit to attendance potentially required by a club or society. However, I have been tying this work in with feedback from the Dodgeball tournament to potentially implement monthly/bimonthly events for students who can't make commitments on a weekly basis. This would include helping building engagement of underrepresented groups of students as well, such as carers, parents, commuters or part-time students etc.
- The Schools' Dodgeball tournament pilot was a big success and I am writing up a report which includes feedback from those who participated. It was clear by communicating with students through their academic schools about extra-curricular events, it engaged a group of students that were not previously engaged with University extra-curricular activities so I am now investigating how we can build upon this.
- I have been working with the Activities office to review and address areas of society support we need to develop and improve upon.

### Improving Services

- I have continuing to work with the University to better improve communications around study space. This includes where the study space is, but also occupation levels in particular of the main library as a study space which is in high demand. I am trying to unpick the reasons why students often use the main library as their first choice of study space. There is a focus group being run on this so if anyone is interested in participating please contact me via email.
- I have been working with the Careers Service to help give feedback on research they have done into the 'Future of Work'.

### Celebrating Students

- #WeAreEdinburgh profiles are continuing with a key focus on profiling underrepresented groups such as student carers, parents, mature students, distance learners, part-time students and commuter students.
- Helping with the Student Awards has been a big focus and taken up a lot of time for me this month. We have had such incredible nominations both in quantity and quality.



## Report from Oona Miller, Vice President Welfare

### Committing to Campus Accessibility

- Developed a campaign strategy with Ellen Blunsdon, Disabled Students' Officer, for the recently passed Student Council Motion 'Free Bus Passes for Disabled Students'. This includes plans to write to local and national level politicians, co-signed by University colleagues, and to raise the issue at NUS Scotland conference.
- I am developing the Disability Framework; I raised this at the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, where this piece of work will be taken forward.
- Hosted the Disabled Students' Forum for all students. The feedback has gone back to the Student Disability Service and other presenters. I am currently taking steps to close the feedback loop with attendees.

### Fostering a Compassionate University Community

- Organised and hosted first event for student sex workers where I secured our developing partnership with Umbrella Lane to provide education and support around the issue and to the relevant students.
- Attended the University Listening Project film panel, hosted by the Chaplaincy, where I engaged in discussions about what makes a compassionate university.
- 3-day Rape Crisis Scotland training has been delivered to Resident Assistants and student leaders as the first stage of the consent training pilot, so progress is well underway!
- Approved the final model of Student Support and Personal Tutoring – this is a huge step forward for the entire University community. This is subject to financial approval by the University Executive Committee, but the model should be realised in September 2021.

### Tackling Elitism and Building Inclusivity

- Working with Tackling Elitism students to develop a long-term structure for its political campaign.
- Engaged with the University's Sense of Belonging project on the inclusion of marginalised communities in Sense of Belonging work.

### In other news

- Attended University Court where I raised concerns about racism in light of the coronavirus outbreak and highlighted the impact this is having on our Chinese and other South-East Asian students.
- While Student Elections are just beginning, I am already beginning to work on my handover for my successor!



## Report from Rosheen Wallace, Vice President Community

### Ecosia

- Following the motion passed last month, I have met with University staff in the Information Services Department to discuss the possibility of installing Ecosia as the default search engine. This discussion was very encouraging as it looks likely that this could be put in place, although it would likely be implemented for new users at the start of the next academic year.
- I am now working on an awareness campaign to encourage as many students and staff as possible to switch their default browser to Ecosia.

### Flatmate-finding website

- I have drawn up a proposal for this website and a plan for what should be included. There are still some logistics to work out (staffing), but it looks hopeful and this would essentially be a website replacing the physical notice board in the advice place for those looking for flats and flatmates.
- I also released a video on tenancy rights which also helped to promote the housing fair.

### Guarantor scheme

- I've contacted several other Universities with similar schemes to find out how their schemes work, and whether there is anything that could be learned from how these schemes operate.
- The main issue that has not yet been resolved is that students who use the scheme have to be living with others who also qualify, making the scheme quite restrictive. This doesn't seem to be the case with schemes at other Universities. This is quite a good sign as it means that hopefully this issue could be resolved.
- Updated Advice Place website with a list of letting agents who accept the scheme.
- I've met with a new member of staff who will be leading on the changes to the scheme, and I have another meeting coming up to hear back from legal services on the legal implications of the scheme and how this might be addressed.

### Sustainability committee

- First meeting of the sustainability committee is coming up where we will use the NUS green Impact criteria to assess where we are. One big topic for this group to discuss will be single-use plastics (in light of the recent motion and lots of questions from students about this issue).

### Other

- Released a video about cycling facilities.
- Met with staff in the Scottish parliament to discuss the negative impact of Private halls on students.
- Attended Ethical fundraising advisory group and Space strategy group.
- Met with Shrub to discuss running the freeshop and collections for the next academic year.



## Report from Stephanie Vallancey, Vice President Education

### Hidden Course Costs

- I have been developing one of my key manifesto points and addressing all hidden course costs at University. The first, and largest focus has been on Edinburgh College of Art and the amount of money students are expected to pay to finish their degree. I am currently gathering data from each programme and course submission requirements for materials and the costs of those and looking at the realistic solutions to addressing this problem.
- I have had meetings with the Head of School and we are starting to take steps to working groups to find solutions to the large financial problems in the school. This work has been a pilot to work how other schools can effectively move towards abolishing all hidden course costs

### School Reps/Representation

- Working with staff at College of Science and Engineering to develop representation pathways for issues to be escalated that are particularly relevant to the college. We have two different groups running, one for Taught students and one for Research students. This is the second semester of the pilot and we will be reevaluating at the end of this term.
- Continuing meetings with looking at Course Enhancement Questionnaires and if they are fit for purpose, alongside wider discussions on the use of all student feedback
- The School Rep Handbook is still in development this over the next month or so, and we will be ensuring it is fit for use for the next wave of elected reps!
- We had another School Rep forum where we were able to discuss a few topics including data, feedback, and the upcoming strikes.
- Attended University Senate with our new Student Representatives. We had discussions on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) the new Student Support/Personal Tutor system which will be implemented in 2021/22.

### Industrial Action

- There will be a second round of Industrial Action for 14 days from Feb 24-27, March 2-6, 9-13. There is a motion coming to Student Council to continue our support of this industrial action alongside an expenditure request which will be discussed later on.
- We are having continuous meetings with both UCU and the University over the action, to prepare and respond to ensure minimal impact on students' wellbeing, learning and teaching. In doing this we have been assured that all support services including the counselling and disability service at the library will remain unpicketed
- We will be coordinating additional study space for students in Pleasance and Teviot as well as hosting several Teach-Outs from UCU during this time
- For more information you can check out the website: <https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/yourvoice/ourwork/industrialaction/> which will be updated with relevant information as we get it.



## Paper B: Solidarity with Students in Kashmir and on University Campuses in India

### What we will do

1. Provide advice to students at the University on how to get support if they are distressed because their friends and family members are affected by the political events recognising that the University probably has more accurate advice to give, as well as more routes to the students affected.
2. Provide guidance on these events to students travelling to India on fieldwork, for internships, or other programme-related activities
3. To work with the Centre for South Asian Studies and students from South Asia at the University to facilitate and promote events that spread information about the issues around Kashmir, the Citizenship Amendment Act, National Register of Citizens, and how the University community will be better able to support students with friends and families in areas affected
4. To issue a statement in solidarity with Kashmiri students as well as students at Aligarh Muslim University, Cotton University, Gauhati University, Jamia Millia Islamia, Jawarharlal Nehru University, the University of Delhi, as well as other higher education institutions in India supporting their democratic right to protest in the face of state-sponsored violence

### Background to this

1. The student body has over 400 students from South Asia, for whom the political conflict in their home country may be distressing because their friends and family may be affected.
2. Many students travel to India for fieldwork for their programmes, or have internships or other programme requirements that need them to travel, who will be adversely affected by the escalating political conflict
3. The conflict in India is part of a wider crackdown on free speech in universities across the world which affects the student community more widely, which causes distress to overseas students with friends and family in affected areas
4. Students in universities in India were faced with state-sponsored violence and repression for protesting the rise in their university fees as well as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 and the proposed implementation of a National Register of Citizens, which causes distress to overseas students with friends and family in affected areas.
5. The right to free speech and peaceful assembly are enshrined in Article 19 of India's constitution
6. Kashmir has been in a state of lockdown since the abrogation of Article 370 in the Indian Constitution, with Kashmiri students facing violence and harm for protesting, creating barriers for overseas students from the area to contact their friends and family
7. On 30 January, A student was injured on campus of Jamia Millia Islamia as a man opened fire in full view of the police, who failed to intervene, which is a distressing and traumatic event for students who have friends attending JMI

### Beliefs and motivating actions

1. The Students Union represents a large number of International Students from India who are distressed by with recent political events and are unable to support their friends and family as they study overseas
2. It is incumbent upon the Students Association to stand in solidarity with these students in India, as a violation of their right to free speech is an injustice to us all.

**Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Vivek Santayana.**



## Paper C: Continue Supporting the University Staff in their Industrial Action

### What we will do

1. To support the University staff and the University and College Union in their industrial action with the University during their upcoming strike action, as well as any future strike action or action short of strike part of the current Pensions and Four Fights dispute on pay, equality, workload, and casualization
2. For the Sabbatical Officers to coordinate with the UCU Committee in spreading awareness about the reasons for the strike, and build solidarity between staff and students
3. Facilitate and provide venues for teach-outs and events to spread information amongst the student body about the issues behind the industrial action
4. Provide information to students on what a picket line is
5. Provide alternative study spaces for students so they do not have to cross picket lines at university buildings to study
6. Lobby the University to stop pressuring students to cross picket lines using deadlines, the overzealous enforcing of the Hostile Environment policy or other threats
7. Lobby the University to consider solidarity with industrial action as legitimate reasons for student absence and to stop penalising students who miss classes because they do not cross picket lines
8. Lobby the University to mandate that Course Organisers and Exam Boards exempt material that was not taught due to strike action from exams and assessments
9. Lobby the University to invest withheld pay in the Discretionary and Hardship Fund and other support services such as the peer proofreading service, Advice Place, and/or Counselling Service, offered by EUSA and the University
10. Lobby the University to ensure fair contracts and working conditions for PhD students who are on scholarships that require them to teach.

### Background to this

1. The UCU industrial dispute with the university management is ongoing and the UCU has called further strike action in February and March
2. The employers have not made adequate progress in addressing staff concerns regarding pensions, a median gender wage gap amongst staff, exploitative workloads, and precarious employment of staff members.
3. During the last strike, students felt compelled to cross picket lines because of intimidating emails from course organisers about deadlines and exams or because of the Home Office's Hostile Environment policies.
4. The Principal has made no clear commitment to what aspects of 'student experience' the withheld pay will be used for.
5. Some PhD students' contracts require them to undertake which mean they may feel unable to observe the strike.

### Beliefs and motivating actions

1. Staff working conditions are our learning conditions
2. The University management's commitment to providing good 'student experience' cannot be sustained without fair treatment of staff
3. The University's policies around workload, pay, pensions, and working conditions for staff has adversely affected the standard of our education.





4. The implementation of PhD scholarships that incorporate teaching goes against the spirit of the anti-casualisation agreement between the University and UCU.
5. Staff and students must work together to defend higher education

**Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Vivek Santayana.**

## Paper D: Expenditure Request: To fund materials for supporting University staff in industrial action

### Amount of Funding

Up to £250

### Background to this

1. University of Edinburgh staff will be taking strike action between 24th February and 13<sup>th</sup> March
2. In supporting strike action, Students' Association will provide materials to people on picket lines, organising events, or students doing any other form of supportive activity
3. In November Student Council the Students Association submitted an expenditure request of up to £750 to support the activity for the Industrial Action in 2019. The proposed £250 is to supplement the remaining funds, and all funding left over will return to the Student Council Budget at the end of the academic year.

### Beliefs and motivating actions

1. In previous years, the Students' Association has supported striking University staff by organising events with UCU, providing campaign materials like badges or posters, and provided hot drinks to people on picket lines or doing teach-outs.

### Breakdown

1. Badges, posters, banners, hot drinks, etc.

**Submitted by Association Executive.**



## Paper E: Create a Section Representative post for Students who commute to University

### What we will do

1. Create a new student section representative post that represents students who travel to the University of Edinburgh from home
2. The post should be filled during the Postgraduate Election cycle in October 2020 and subsequently in every Spring cycle, as per other representative positions.
3. The post should be filled and elected by those who live at home and outside Edinburgh; determined whichever way the Students' Association sees fit.
4. The Sabbatical Officers shall, in association with the University, additionally conduct a study to understand why some students choose to commute to University from home and how the Students' Association can best support these students

### Background to this

1. Some students, particularly those from Fife and the Lothians, decide to commute to University from home instead of moving to Edinburgh for a variety of reasons, including the cost of living in Edinburgh and a preference to continue living with their parents.
2. Because of the longer journey times to and from university, these students often have fewer opportunities to engage and interact with the Students' Association and Student Societies, as well as making new friends there.
3. Many bus and rail services out of Edinburgh don't operate after around 11:00pm on most nights, meanwhile Lothian Buses operates a comprehensive NightBus network.
4. Campaigns that are run by the Students' Association, particularly those relating to cost of living, appear not to focus at all on students who live outside the city and are often excluded from debates and representation that is relevant to them.
5. Students from Fife particularly sometimes struggle to reach university as a result of poorer public transport links and severe weather than those from Edinburgh benefit from.
6. In February 2020, the Queensferry Crossing was closed in both directions as a result of ice and snow forming and falling from the cables, damaging vehicles.
7. Both the road and public transport networks struggled to cope with the increased demand and some students will have been unable to attend classes as a result of this disruption.
8. The Students' Association and the University did not publicly acknowledge these issues as they were happening.
9. In December 2015, the Forth Road Bridge was closed for several weeks after a major defect was found on the bridge.
10. This closure happened during that semester's exam season and commuting students were affected.
11. At the time, the University acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and offered students discounted accommodation if they were unable or unwilling to travel to/from Fife.
12. Local media in Fife frequently report frustrations with the rail service provided to Fifers, with trains often running late, have fewer carriages than there should be, or simply don't run at all and often at short notice.
13. The time spent commuting often makes students more tired and gives them less time to complete their studies during the week than those who live nearer to campus and have closer access to study facilities.



## Beliefs and motivating actions

1. The issues that affect students who commute from home haven't been voiced because there is nobody currently to represent them.
2. This group of students need and deserve a voice within the Students' Association.
3. The University should be doing more to support students who commute to Edinburgh and its campuses from a transportation, academic and social viewpoint.
4. Commuting students' access to services and activities provided by the Students' Association and the University are in need of improvement.

**Submitted with 40 Student Signatures by Jeremy Pestle.**



## Paper F: Pilot to Provide High-Fidelity Noise-Cancelling Earplugs for Students with Hearing Needs to Compensate for Ambient Noise in Students' Association Venues

Amount of funding

£375

Background to this

1. Venues in Teviot (such as the Dining Room and Study) and Pleasance (such as the Trust Upper Hall, Lomond Room, etc) have poor acoustics because of a combination of factors, such as a lack of sound-absorbing panelling, curtains and, in some cases, carpets.
2. Ambient noise is a big problem in these venues for society events, particularly when they follow a workshop format with multiple simultaneous speakers, as well as during meetings like for Student Council
3. The poor acoustics and high levels of background noise poses accessibility problems for students with hearing needs (such as hearing loss or D/deafness), attention or sensory needs (like with ADHD or autism spectrum conditions), or mental health conditions aggravated by sensory overstimulation (like anxiety disorder).
4. Equipment like high-fidelity earplugs offer short term solutions to make these venues more accessible while the University implements long term improvements
5. These earplugs have been used before in gigs and nightclubs to deal with ambient noise

Beliefs and motivating actions

1. The poor infrastructure with regard to venue acoustics create barriers to participation for people with disabilities
2. High-fidelity earplugs are available which filter background noise and protect people's hearing that can serve as 'auxiliary aid' as per §20.(5) of the Equality Act (2010) for people with some needs to enable them to make use of the services EUSA provides.
3. The cost of such equipment is relatively high compared to society membership and would pose a further barrier to students with disabilities if they are expected to purchase it themselves to participate in student societies
4. There needs to be a pilot to assess the extent to which such earplugs will be an effective solution for different kinds of hearing-related needs
5. Feedback from the pilot can be used to assess the feasibility of implementing this more widely
6. Such a measure will make society events and student council meetings more accessible and inclusive
7. EUSA has a duty as per §29.(7) of the Equality Act (2010) to provide reasonable adjustments to people with disabilities who use its services
8. Societies need additional support to be able to implement measures to make their events more accessible

Breakdown

1. £375 to buy a set of 25 Earpeace earplugs (shipping included)

**Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Vivek Santayana.**