



Student Council Minutes

Thursday 21st November 2019, 6-8pm, Teviot Debating Hall

Paper	Votes For	Votes Against	Abstentions	Percentage in Favour
A: President's Report	77.5	13	106	86%
B: VP Activities' Report	86	5.5	105	94%
C: VP Welfare's Report	85	2.5	108	97%
D: VP Education's Report	87	6	103.5	94%
E: VP Community's Report	73.5	3.5	118.5	95%
F: Elected Rep Transparency	104	47	53.5	69%
G: Freedom of Student Press*	139	8.5	59	94%
H: Shuttle Bus Continuation	219.5	11	4	95%

1. Accountability

a. Beth Fellows, VP Activities and Services

Q: Jeremy Pestle: Is there scope to make the #TakeTen campaign permanent? Student wellbeing matters all year round, not just during Mental Health and Wellbeing Week.

A: Happy birthday by the way Jeremy! Definitely there's scope for this. I hope it'll continue in the years to come. A big win for me in Mental Health and Wellbeing Week was that the #TakeTen put on digital wall in the library so that you can click on it to find links to mental health related services and resources. But, yes, I'd like to see #TakeTen taken forward and I would like other people to pick up on this too.

Q: Gethin Binns, Law Undergraduate Representative: Is there a possibility that you could tell us about the legal status of societies and their standing to enter into contractual legal obligations?

A: This is something I will need to look into and I'll pick it up with you offline if that's okay?

b. Oona Miller, VP Welfare

Q: Jeremy Pestle: I just wanted to ask, regarding the antisemitism training was that all sabbs and some staff? What do you know about antisemitism issues at the university? What does the Association want to do to combat it?

A: The decision to have training was off the back of a request from the Jewish community at Edinburgh. We recognise the rise of antisemitism across UK and at the university, and it's

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growing at the University of Edinburgh. The Jewish Society raised concerns about increasing incidents of anti-Semitic hate speech through stickers, flyers and such. Some of this was from external organisations and people who made their way onto campus, but also people within the university. It was a really good learning experience and there are various actions we're putting in place. It was mandated from Student Council last year that we should hold an event for Holocaust Memorial Day, we we'll do that. The BME Liberation community has been engaging with the Jewish community and Jewish leaders on campus have been working with the university to revise its antisemitism policy, which at the moment is vague at best.

c. **Stephanie Vallancey, VP Education**

Q: Pre-submitted question: Is it feasible that we could live-stream lectures by semester two?

A: That's most likely not possible because next semester is too short timeframe. We are at the end of our lecture recording consultation. Lecture recording allows the lecturer time to cut out bits such as sensitive information or a student who doesn't want their voice to be recorded. In short, next semester is too soon, but maybe sometime in the future.

Q: Kyle: What are we doing to encourage students not to cross the picket line during the strikes next week?

A: Yes, we are encouraging students not to cross the picket line. There will be guidance going out from the university, the students' association and the UCU.

Q: Hope: Is there an official list of what buildings will be picketed? And also, how important is it to you to record lectures across subjects?

A: I will have to get back to you on that, I'm not sure if there's an official list of buildings that will be picketed. The library and key support services will not be picketed. Regarding lecture recording, it's an opt out policy just now and it's the right of lecturer to decide whether or not to record their lectures. We're still at this stage, but you can still ask your lecturer why they don't record and ask them to start recording.

Q: Are you concerned that you won't be able to deliver on reducing hidden course costs by the end of term as this was a pledge for January pledge?

A: I didn't expect to finish tackling hidden course costs by the end of my term. I'm aiming to produce a recommendations paper for the university, which I hope will be taken forward and have longer term impact.

Q: Tumi Akeke, Volunteering Representative: What are you doing to support marginalised students in their labs, who perhaps don't have the same prior knowledge as others?



A: We have a few aspects to help students such as our liberation groups and peer support schemes.

d. Andrew Wilson, President

Q: Gethin Binns, Law Undergraduate Representative: Given that you believe in students as change makers, do you support the increased remit of student council to oversee Association finances?

A: I'm more than happy to chat about this, but at the moment I see Student Council as being responsible for policy, and the trustee board has the responsibility to oversee the finances of the Association as a charity. And again, I welcome you to submit a motion if you wish to change this.

Q: Jeremy Pestle: I heard that you're reaching out to general election candidates. How much success have you had in contacting them? How much student input have you had? Will there be some kind of event for students to hear from them?

A: I'm hoping to compile a list with Presidents of the other universities in Edinburgh to make a kind of manifesto for Edinburgh students, which we'll send out to all candidates. It'll cover transport, housing and other issues affecting students. There's no capacity for a hustings because of the strikes, but I know the Debating Union run a hustings which we promote. I'll be doing a general election viewing party, so join me for politics and free food!

e. Rosheen Wallace, VP Community

Rosheen was absent because she was unwell, but the Andrew Wilson highlighted what she's been working on, and we noted the following questions for her to answer in a video Q&A.

Q: Jeremy Pestle: Does Rosheen think the Association and the University could do more to promote the quieter cycle route between central campus and kings buildings?

Q: Regarding the group for bus feedback, I signed up for that at the first meeting but I haven't heard anything. What happened to it?

A: Andrew Wilson, President: Yes, I share your frustration. We were told it would be set up, but the university delayed it, not the Association. I'm happy it's been established, and you should sign up again. But I share frustrations and we had nothing to do with it!

2. Motions

a. Motion for elected Officials' Transparency and Accountability, submitted by Jordan Dowd, Political Activities Representative



Speech for from proposer, Jordan Dowd, Political Activities Representative:

The gist of this motion is that people involved in running societies told us they want to see the public voting records of representatives as it makes it easier for them to participate. We introduced a version last month and a lot of people objected to the inclusion of the Liberation Officers because it may open them up to harassment. I thought about this for about 37 seconds and realised everyone was right, so this is a new version which excludes the Liberation Officers.

Questions

Q: Rosie Taylor, LGBT+ Officer: I'm grateful you've changed the motion to exclude Liberation Officers, but I ask people when they are voting to consider if marginalised students be less likely to run because of this policy.

A: No answer was given, as this was more of a comment than a question.

Q: David Renton, Part Time Students' Representative: I appreciate the raising of the concern around marginalisation. Given that the motion has not changed much since last time, could you explain why people should vote for it this time?

A: The only real objection I heard last time was the inclusion of the Liberation Officers, which I should really have thought of before. General consensus seemed to be that once they weren't included the motion would be supported. I was not made aware of any other objections.

Q: Jeremy Pestle: Thank you for resubmitting the motion. Given that this version explicitly excludes the Liberation Officers based on the fact that they only represent a section of students, should others such as academic representatives and section representatives who only represent a section of students also be excluded? Meaning that we should only publish the voting records of Sabbatical Officers?

A: I excluded the Liberation Officers because they have defined interests of not inviting harassment from those outside the marginalised groups, whereas other representatives do not have that problem.

Speech against from Tumi Akeke, Volunteering Representative:

I agree with what you say about elected representatives being transparent, but it would be the same with any marginalised students and students in general. The abuse they could get because of their voting record has the potential to be the same. Yes, they are representatives but they also have their own views. Maybe we could publish votes of the elected representatives as a whole rather than attaching people's names to protect them from harassment.



Speech for from Gethin Binns, Law Undergraduate Representative:

I appreciate the points of previous speaker and Rosie. We may be preventing voices from being heard and opening people up to harassment. I share this concern: I once shared a post on social media with an opinion I still stand by. It said that TERF is not a slur and I got a lot of hate mail for it. I stand by transgender individuals. However, I'm still an elected official and I should be scrutinised as is the nature of my office.

Speech against from Harry Fletcher:

Every elected official is elected because they feel they can do good for the people. I worry that this motion pressures people to vote a certain way to find the most acceptable outcome for group. People may not want to stick out for voting against something and I worry for this kind of motion.

Summation from proposer, Jordan Dowd, Political Activities Representative:

With regards to the concern about opening up records making people vulnerable to harassment, I'd just say that this is modelled on changes to the rules made at other universities. In our research we were unable to find incidents of social media harassment as a result of a Student Council vote and we, of course, want to prevent this in our community. We want to increase positive participation.

b. Motion for the freedom of Student Press, submitted by Craig Buchan

Speech for from proposer, Craig Buchan

Hello everyone, I'm Craig, editor in chief of 'The Student' but I submitted this motion in a personal capacity. Press freedom is an important part of any democracy, including student democracy. This motion will allow societies to hold the Association to account in its every day work. This motion is an important step as this hasn't always been the case and I felt the need to introduce the motion so that it becomes Association policy but also so that measures are in place to protect press freedom.

c. Amendment to the motion for the freedom of Student Press, submitted by Association Executive

Speech for from proposer, Beth Fellows, VP Activities and Services

We are in favour of the motion but we wanted to make an amendment to improve factual accuracy of the motion. We've just made sure it's clear that the Association is legally responsible for 'The Student' as a society, and that Student Council doesn't have financial control over this, but we want to continue the Association's advertising spend.

Questions

Q: In regards to the amendment, some people made clear to me that the Association gets a bee in its bonnet if EUTV were to make doc which is critical of the Association and would



attempt to stifle such a documentary with an angrily worded email. Does this amendment give the Association power they shouldn't have?

A: Andrew Wilson, President: we aren't aware of an angrily worded email to EUTV over a documentary so I would dispute that point. This amendment doesn't give the Association extra power, we just want to tie up the legal responsibilities.

Q: Craig Buchan, motion proposer: Would the Association acknowledge that clause 1a could be interpreted so that societies couldn't bring up something that the Association have done which could get them into legal trouble? Would you acknowledge that the fact that societies couldn't bring this up reverses the point of the motion?

A: Beth Fellows, VP Activities and Services: The amendment is purely to reflect that 'The Student' is a society just like the like other 302 societies, so the Association is ultimately legally responsible, so that's the only reason for that amendment.

Speech against from Gethin Binns, Law Undergraduate Representative

On the grounds of the good point Craig brought up earlier I will be voting against this motion. Legal trouble for the Association could include anything that could raise any legal liability, such as if the Association were doing something wrong and they were exposed by 'The Student,' this would be prevented by this amendment and the Association could carry on with illegal activities. I am troubled by the reference to 'The Student' and not media societies in general. Finally, clause 3 would be easier if the Student Council had access to the financial budget of the Association.

Summation from proposer, Association Executive

Andrew Wilson: This amendment is simply a clarifying point because the Association has ultimate legal liability for student media. If the amendment doesn't pass we still have legal liability, the amendment just clarifies this point, you can vote it down but we still have legal liability. Regarding access to finance: bring a motion to Student Council.

Results of hand vote: amendment falls

For: 25

Against: 43

Abstain:

14

d. Un-amended motion for the freedom of Student Press, submitted by Craig Buchan

Questions

Q: Jeremy Pestle: Do you agree that it's important for the Association to present that it has ultimate legal liability for the student media societies?



A: I would suggest, actually, that the contents of the amendment already exist whether or not it passed. The complex wording was why it was voted down. No media society wants to land itself in legal trouble so we are happy to have help from Association in these incidents.

Q: Owen, Geography Student: could clause 3 be overly prescriptive if the Association's overall budget drops? Could that take money from other societies? Is it reckless to maintain funding for 'The Student' rather than other societies?

A: Advertising funding has already been cut in recent years. This motion is for all media societies, not just 'The Student.' They all have an important role to play in our democracy, and it costs money to print papers, buy cameras and such. Funding is already restricted and this could put their existence at risk. It is not intended to take away from other societies, but rather is meant to prevent the Association from exerting control - I included this clause to be on the safe side.

Q: Emma, Physics Student: Thanks for raising this issue. I agree with the premise of the motion, but I'm concerned that clauses 3 and 4 are an unfortunate way of ensuring that what you want will happen. The media serves as a watchdog, and it's difficult for 'The Student' as it is funded by those it aims keep in check. I'm worried that funding will be difficult going forward: do you have any other ideas of how to prevent the Association from forcing particular reporting without these clauses?

A: Media societies are dependent on money from adverts and other support from the Association, such as asking for comment from a Sabbatical Officer. If the Association was allowed to withhold these things it would jeopardise the existence of these societies - detrimental impact - formally restricts editorial control to help with informal restriction too - wording is strong on purpose because designed to defend

Summation from proposer

I hope you'll vote in favour of defending the media. It plays such an important role in holding the Association to account, providing quality content for individual groups and areas, and it plays an important role in the whole student experience. This motion ensures continued independent existence, so I encourage to vote in favour of strengthening our democratic process and improving the student experience.

e. Motion for Shuttle Bus (KB) Continuation, submitted by Juliette Martin

Speech for from proposer, Juliette Martin

No matter which way you look at it, this is a regressive policy. It places huge financial stress on a large number of students who are reliant on the shuttle to get between classes at KB and George Square, which we are timetabled to do by the university. This is a particular problem for joint honours students and those in pre-honours who take electives. By removing the shuttle the university is cutting choices of students who are restricted by the geography of the



university, and wider choices are restricted to only those who can afford to take the bus or cycle.

Questions

Q: Tumi Akeke, Volunteering Representative: The University told us they would take away the shuttle bus in April or May and many people voiced their minds but the university says they will still remove the shuttle service, so why do you think the motion will make them change their mind this time? Have you read the fact that there could be discounted bus card for everyone for different parts of the city?

A: Thank you, yes, we believe Association support would be helpful in giving more voice to the issue. The Association exists to represent us and it is the duty of the university to provide transport for people to get between classes that they timetabled us to do. The student bus pass is still unaffordable and requires you to set up a direct debit when not all international students have access to direct debit.

Q: Heather McAdam, Medical School Undergraduate Representative: We had a similar issue a year ago: there is not a shuttle to BioQuarter, it wasn't affordable so didn't go ahead. Why is it fair that funding all goes towards KB students?

A: I'm not saying we are more special, there should be provision for you as well but this is a separate issue as we already have provision and students come to this university on the basis that there is transport provision. I empathise but I think it's a separate issue.

Q: Mickey Ferguson, History, Classics and Archaeology Undergraduate Representative: since this motion indefinite, is it a good motion to ensure the provision of buses is in place until the university decide what to do?

A: I'd be grateful for guidance from the Sabbatical Officers on this, but I believe there's an expiration of 4 years on motions. I hope that in 4 years it would be taken forward again, but at the moment I want the shuttle bus at current level of provision for as long as possible.

Speech against from Tumi Akeke, Volunteering Representative

I walk to George Square and get the shuttle to Kings Buildings, but think about the rest of the university. Not all students live close to central campus and need a bus pass. Why do kings students get special treatment when we could all have discounted travel to go anywhere they want to? Consider everyone at the university who needs access to discounted card that will provide improved access for all.

Speech for from Jeremy Pestle

I have a point about the issue of the cheaper Ridacard: there is a student Ridacard already, which is cheaper than what university was planning to offer. I am in favour of this motion wholly on issue on capacity. There is no viable solution. When the shuttle was full and the

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Lothian number 44 was also full, there was no way to get between campuses. There is no reliable services at peak times, and students put extra pressure on the already stretched public transport system. Students struggle to make classes on time and put pressure on rest of the city.

Speech against

I agree that we should all have access to free fair transport, and this is not a separate issue as the funding comes from the same pot. I had my shuttle bus taken away despite the increasing number of students moving to BioQuarter. The 24 is already at capacity and we need a shuttle service until plans are in place. It would be fairer for everyone to have discounted bus travel rather than one group having a free service while everyone else struggles.

Summation from proposer, Juliette Martin

Regards living further away, the issue here is not commuting but getting to classes we are timetabled to attend. Some students may have to go back and forth between campuses twice in a day. I don't want to be rude, I want the med school to have a shuttle too. This surely means that the university need to invest more in transport rather than turning this into a school vs school debate. Med students could raise this issue themselves as it is also the university's duty to help you out.

3. Any Other Business

Andrew Wilson, President

I would like to invite you to invite to the bus user forum next Thursday from 6-8pm – you can sign up with Grace at the front. Also, please fill out transport survey!

Rosie Taylor, LGBT+ Officer

I would echo what Andrew just said, especially if you are a student who has barriers that make things really difficult when you don't have free transport. Also, on the 5th after the strikes we are having an event LGBT+ students and staff to debate issues around platforming of speakers and chatting to senior members of staff and diversity staff, so come along to shape policy and get some free food!

Stephanie Vallancey, VP Education

There's a strike on Monday and if you'd like to help by bringing picketers hot drinks, hot water bottles et cetera, there's a sign-up sheet at front.

NUS Scotland

NUS Scotland will be hosting the Student Action Day on Thursday 5th December, 10am-3pm. This is a free event, comprised of 2 parts. The first part of the day will focus on campaigning and activism, and we'll run a range of workshops to help attendees develop the skills they

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Representation & Democracy

need to do both. They'll be running sessions on using the media, craftivism, door knocking and participative decision-making. For more information contact Grace Fisher.

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