Student Council
Thursday 26th November 2020, 18:00-20:00 (GMT), Microsoft Teams

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AGENDA

Welcome

Sabbatical Officer Accountability
  Paper A

Accessibility Break

Expenditure Request:
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Any Other Business (AOB)
  Shout outs

Staff Directory: who to ask for help during the meeting
  • Democracy Regulations: Sarah Moffat
  • General Questions: Grace Fisher
  • 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: Sabbatical Officer Accountability

Report from Ellen MacRae, President

At the start of November, your Sabbatical Officers hosted a #YourVoice Townhall event with Peter Mathieson, Colm Harmon, Tina Harrison, Gavin Douglas, Catherine Martin and Gavin McLachlan. This provided a really valuable opportunity for Senior Leadership to be open and transparent with you whilst providing answers to some frequently asked questions. We addressed pre-submit questions and some ask, live, during the event, the majority of which fell under four categories: COVID-19 restrictions; tuition fees and teaching; IT and resources and accommodation. The event recording and questions are available at www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/YourVoiceTownHall and we are still working on collating more answers from Senior Leadership for you. Our work in these topics is not done, we know that these are still areas of concern and we will continue to work with the University, NUS Scotland and Government to achieve better outcomes for you all.

In addition to work for this event, in line with the three main theme of my manifesto, I’ve also:

Accessibility

- Been involved in discussions with NUS Scotland and the University about how we can assist getting students home for the holidays safely and then back in the new semester,
- These conversations have also included how we will support the large number of students planning to remain here over the holidays, not just in catered University Halls of Residence but self-catered and private accommodation too.

Change

- I’ve really enjoyed starting my Working from my Bedroom campaign and sharing what working from my bedroom looks like for me on Instagram (@EdUniStudentsAssociation)!
- The next steps will be sharing the tips you use to deal with working from home, you can still get involved – check out: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/WorkingFromMyBedroom. This has also tied in well with the Let’s Talk Mental Health and Wellbeing project that’s run from the 9th – 27th November this year.

Transparency

- Amanda, VP Community, and I met with Ian Murray MP for Edinburgh South, to discuss the challenges faces by our students this year,
- I also met with Tommy Sheppard MP for Edinburgh East to have a similar discussion with a focus on the Government supporting students getting home for the holidays and asymptomatic testing and
- I participated in Sense about Science Evidence Week to ask how Parliament can monitor the level of COVID-19 infection in students. You can skip to 1:27:48 here to see my question (and a question from a University of Exeter student) addressed by Tommy Sheppard MP and the UK’s National Statistician, Sir Ian Diamond.

As always – please do get in touch whenever you need: President@eusa.ed.ac.uk or @EdUniPresident on Twitter!
Report from Rachel Irwin, VP Activities and Services

It feels like barely any time has passed since our last Student Council! Alas, here we are. This month has seen a greater focus on planning for a return to in-person activity to ensure we are ready to mobilise whenever government guidance allows. As we approach the end of the semester, I’ve been reflecting on lessons learned from Semester 1 and looking ahead to Semester 2, with a view to improving and learning from what we experienced, for example how our experience of Welcome Week can improve Give It A Go Week in January.

University/Adaptation & Renewal

- I’ve continued to sit on the Study Spaces Working Group alongside Fizzy, which came to an end last week. Although the group will no longer meet on a weekly basis, I would still like to remind students that they can feedback any thoughts on study spaces with us.
- Along with your other Sabbatical Officers, we hosted a #YourVoice Town Hall with members of the University’s Senior Leadership Team, covering topics such as accommodation, tuition fees and teaching, and IT and Library resources, giving students the opportunity to ask questions directly to key decision makers within the University.
- I’ve been in conversations with the University Inductions Team and others on what support we can offer to students remaining in Edinburgh over the Christmas break as well as what we can do to improve student wellbeing and sense of belonging during these trying times.

Societies & Student Groups

- Aiming to fight feelings of isolation and provide more opportunities for socialising, this month saw the launch of our new Coffee Buddies scheme, in which societies and student leaders can book space within our venues to facilitate 1:1 meet-ups between their members and enjoy a complimentary hot drink!
- Planning is now underway for Give It A Go week – giving students the opportunity to sign up for societies and student groups that they may have missed in first semester, and spotlighting some of our newly formed societies in particular.
- We are working on plan a alongside the University for a phased return to in-person activity within University spaces, and hoping there may be a possibility of this in semester 2, depending on government restrictions.

Manifesto

- Sustainability: Alongside Amanda, I have continued to work on our Green During Covid-19 campaign. We have also now opened this up to our sustainability-focused student groups, who we are looking forward to collaborating with on this.
- Accessibility: This month I also sat on the Participation Grant application panel. It was fantastic to be so directly involved in this process which grants students from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to engage in extra-curricular activity.
- Connectivity: Though perhaps not directly manifesto-related, I was lucky enough to be invited to sit on the panel to select next year’s University Challenge team for the University of Edinburgh. It was a pleasure to be involved in this process, and amazing to see the hard work of our Quiz Society in organising this (indicative of the dedication and innovation of all of our student groups despite the challenges they face at the moment!)
Report from Amanda Sully, VP Community

Engaging with the Local Community

- This month I filmed a promotional video and officially launched the form for the Community Guide! We are looking for students and staff at the university to put a spotlight on some of their favourite community spaces in order to celebrate the local area and give students an idea of what they can still do while living in the city. If you are interested in contributing to the guide you can do so here!
- Brought forward a paper to Association Executive on pairing with local and ethical businesses through vouchers and incentives. This was approved in principle and I am now working on guidelines for what businesses we can partner with and what this will look like in practice.

Tackling the Climate Emergency

- Continued working with Rachel on our Green During COVID-19 Campaign by reaching out to student groups to help get their expertise and help put the work of students at the forefront of the campaign and researching tips on Travel, Food, Consumer Activism, and Education and Resources on the climate emergency. If you are interested in further helping shape this campaign, please reach out!
- I hosted the first Green Hub Event where I had a really great and productive conversation with students around the future of this space and will be aiming to host monthly discussions within the Green Hub to keep momentum going.
- Worked to push forward planning on long-term sustainability work within the Students’ Association, particularly by helping draft a Sustainability Policy.
- Worked with Rachel to help push forward implementing Ecosia in central computers onto the university’s agenda and we are waiting to hear who will take on this project at the university this year.

Making Edinburgh a Home for All

- I represented NUS Scotland in a Scottish Government workshop on Lessons Learned from the COVID outbreaks in student accommodation, emphasizing the need for clear government guidance that does not target students as one synonymous group and highlighted the increased work needed from both the government and universities in Scotland to work to reduce and provide extra welfare support during the large self-isolation periods our students have had to go through
- Been working with the Transport department to provide to promote active cycling and travel and helping students access free bike lights through an Edinburgh Council campaign and have had initial conversations with the Sustainable Development Association on how to promote active travel.
- Ellen and I met with Ian Murray, the MP for Edinburgh South to discuss issues faces students this year- particularly discussing the need for greater testing and clear information for students regarding going home for the winter holidays.
- Have had initial discussions with a few student groups on how to spotlight housing issues within the city and university and how to empower and organize student tenants.

If you have any questions or want to get involved in any of the campaigns I have mentioned please reach out and send me an email at vpcommunity@eusa.ed.ac.uk
Report from Fizzy Abou-Jawad, VP Education

In the last month, the University has shuffled its Adaptation and Renewal Team efforts and I now have a seat on the newest supergroup – Curriculum and Student Experience working group. Though we have only met once, I am optimistic for the output of this group and the input that myself and Niamh (VP Welfare) will be able to have in shaping next semester. In preparation for this working group I asked all of our academic representatives to provide feedback on their expectations compared to the reality of this semester as well as what they hope to see next semester. Their feedback will provide the basis of our standing for these meetings. I have also made progress in the following areas of my priorities.

**Improving teaching and feedback**

- Chaired the first College Taught SSLC for the College of Science and Engineering
- Attended a PGR Research students agenda setting meeting for the College Research SSLC, which provided insight to issues specific for research students
- Held the second School Rep Forum of this academic year, with both PG and UG School Reps
- Sent out CSE School Rep tiles to relevant schools comms teams, which should build profile of those School Reps
- *Next steps: Ensure planning for semester 2 accurately reflects the changes that students hope to see through my involvement with the Curriculum and Student Experience Working Group.*

**Academic student support**

- Co-Chaired a recovery project meeting with Tina Harrison asking staff for input on community building activities, hope to send out some guidance in the upcoming weeks
- Working with Rachel, VPAS, on a campaign to build awareness of society OB role in SSLCS, which should help foster a greater sense of community in those schools

**Inclusive and accessible learning experience**

- Approved the outline of the new Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy Review in Senate Education Committee
- Have asked for direct BME and International Student involvement in the upcoming curriculum reform
- Have a seat on the CSE curriculum review group, where I plan to ensure changes that are made to the curriculum will result in a more inclusive and accessible learning experience for all students
- *Next Steps: Recently accepted a seat on The University’s new Digital Strategy working group, allowing me to have input to ensure that the future digital strategy will be inclusive and accessible*

**Other**

- Collating and sending feedback from the Townhall we held to MSP Richard Lohead, Minister of Further Education

*Please get in touch with any questions, queries or suggestions – VPEducation@eusa.ed.ac.uk.*
Report from Niamh McCrossan, VP Welfare

This month has been very busy for welfare, filled with many events, campaigns, and wellbeing activities. I have also been in contact with many students whom I look forward to working with on exciting student led initiatives. As always, if you have any issues or ideas, please reach out to me!

Making Edinburgh equal, diverse, and inclusive

- Represented the University by producing and submitting materials for the Scottish government consultation in the final stages of the Period Products Bill’s consideration
- Consulted on the ‘Report and Support’ platform being launched by the university (to be implemented shortly), in order to streamline support offered for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence
- Presented at the ‘Understanding Gender’ roundtable, signposting the work on tackling gender-based violence that has taken place over the years, and how to get involved at the Students’ Association and beyond.
- Developed and produced a miniseries marking 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence running from 25th November-10th December (check it out on social media!)

Facilitating healthy lifestyles

- Successfully lobbied the university to commit to hiring more counselling posts, as well as additional BAME counsellors to specialise in culturally competent care
- Worked with Public Health Scotland to conduct a focus group with students who have had to isolate or quarantine, to assist in lobbying the government to support our students mentally and financially whilst isolating.
- Launched #WellbeingWednesdays, in an attempt to move away from annual allocated spaces to discuss and promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

Alleviating financial worries

- Produced a tool kit for all line managers at the Students’ Association, to assist them in signposting all financial support we have for our students and staff. This is to bridge the gap between our student staff working in our commercial services, to support them with our student funding opportunities. I have included other student unions in this toolkit also.
- Collaborated on two events during estranged students solidarity week; one coffee morning hosted by Tackling Elitism, and one event hosted by the Students’ Association and the Widening Participation team, which was a panel discussion with student representatives and senior members of the university. The event was called ‘Upholding Estranged Students’ Rights to Education 2020-2024

Policy updates

- Holocaust memorial day – began reaching out to relevant student groups to discuss how to mark it on the 27th of January 2021
- Women of Colour Mural on track to be finished by the end of November. Thank you to Ursula Cheng who painted this for us, and Bella Neergaard Petersen for bringing the motion to Student Council!
Paper B: Expenditure Request for Arts and Literature in STEM

Total amount of funding requested:

£175

Background to this:

1. This will be a talent show aimed to showcase the artistic abilities of STEM students.
2. Almost all events within CSE tend to be STEM related, with little to no focus on other aspects.
3. The event has a virtual nature that allows it to be possible under the current restrictions.
4. Collaborative submissions will be allowed, creating opportunity to meet people and providing a social aspect to the event.

Beliefs and Motivating Actions:

1. All of our events and competitions, either by schools or societies, tend to be STEM focused, first year students who do not have a strong foundation in these disciplines yet can sometime be left out of these events. This will be a chance for such students to showcase their skills in other disciplines.
2. We hope that students will be motivated by their peers’ art, and potentially find people with mutual interests, providing an opportunity to build new relationships.
3. Further goals to encourage communication between schools within the CSE, as they are currently somewhat divided between King's Buildings and other campuses.
4. If successful, plans to build on this into a series of events that can happen within colleges, promoting collaboration between CSE and CAHSS.

Expenditure Request:

1. This will cover the absolute minimum required to fund the prize pool. There will be 3 winners, each winning a third of the prize pool.
2. Further funding may be obtained through schools, but no school has fully committed to funding as of yet.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures by Ammir Barakat in November 2020.
Paper C: Marking “Islamophobia Awareness Month” every year

What we will do:

1. The Students’ Association will mark “Islamophobia Awareness Month” (IAM) every year in the month of November, starting in the year 2021.
2. The Students’ Association will allocate an appropriate budget to hold a yearly digital media campaign to mark IAM, as well as promoting suitable events.
3. The Students’ Association will allocate an appropriate budget to host an annual IAM event, as part of their campaign in marking IAM.
4. In accordance to this, raise awareness of the threat of Islamophobia and to encourage better reporting of incidents to the police at Edinburgh University.
5. To adopt the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims definition of Islamophobia: “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.”
6. To work closely with prominent organisations, such as MEND (a leading organisation in marking Islamophobia Awareness Month), to ensure that Islamophobia Awareness Month is marked in an effective manner.

Background to this:

1. Scottish Muslims are still disadvantaged, discriminated against, and feel unsafe in society.
2. The NUS (National Union of Students) has already been marking IAM for a number of years, but EUSA has not yet marked it consistently themselves.
3. There have been reports to the Islamic Society of Muslim students being given non-halal food at Pollock Halls while under lockdown. This is not Islamophobic by itself, however it does highlight societal indifference to the struggles that many Muslim students at Edinburgh University face. It shows the institutionalised islamophobia that is still present in Edinburgh and Scotland.
4. Data from Newcastle University and Holyrood CPG on Tackling Islamophobia shows that over 83% of Scottish Muslims have faced islamophobia.
   a. Over 90% of Muslim respondents fear experiencing Islamophobia.
   b. Over 75% of Muslim respondents believe Islamophobia is getting worse in Scotland.
   c. 60.5% of Muslim respondents said they had altered their behaviours as a result of experiencing Islamophobia.

Beliefs and Motivating Actions:

1. That Muslim students and staff at Edinburgh University have a right to live and study on campus without a fear of experiencing harassment, discrimination, islamophobia or racism.
2. That EUSA has a duty to raise awareness of social issues on campus, and a similar duty to protect and offer services to those who experience Islamophobia.
3. That Islamophobia is a real and serious issue in Edinburgh and Scotland, and needs to be confronted wherever it occurs, in an effective and just manner.

Paper D: Expansion of Active Bystander Training

What we will do:

1. Lobby the university to extend already existing training provisions beyond sports clubs and societies, making it more widely accessible.
2. Have an interactive resource hub with different levels of training available to all students to complete if they wish to do so.
3. Still have mandatory training for office bearers in societies.
4. In the future, this training should be expanded to include other marginalised groups who face harassment and discrimination. This includes, but is not limited to training, which is anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-ableist, anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia. This training should take an intersectional approach, which is sensitive to the fact that multiple marginalisations can stack together to create unique discriminations and further inequality.

Background to this:

1. In the UK, 1 in 4 women will experience domestic abuse and 1 in 5 will experience sexual assault during her lifetime.
2. Sexual crimes accounted for 5% of all crimes recorded in Scotland in 2018-19.
3. In Scotland, sexual crimes are at the highest level since 1971.
4. In Scotland, every 9 minutes, the police attend a call about domestic abuse.
5. 1 in 4 LGB people will experience domestic abuse in their lives.
6. 80% of transgender people have experienced some form of abusive behaviour from a current or ex-partner.
7. Stopping a continuum of violence: there are lots of different types of abuse and often if minor acts go unchallenged then more serious crimes will be committed so it is important to know the warning signs/ red flags to look out for.
8. Currently two office bearers from every society must take the training, which includes online learning and a follow-up discussion with the leader of the training. The University is already keen to expand this to allow more committee members to participate.

Beliefs and Motivating Actions:

1. It is just as important for all students to participate in this training, not just student leaders, as for the wider community to benefit from the training, it needs to reach as many people as possible.
2. I really want to make this available for all students and not just those who are members of societies or sports clubs.
3. Everyone will benefit from the training: possible perpetrators, victims, and active bystanders (including friends of both of the before mentioned) and it is vital that everyone knows how to act/react in these situations, both if you witness an incident or if someone tells you about an incident.
4. There is always strength in numbers so if people are nervous to act in a situation but know that the people around them have also received the same training then it means people can join together to act in the appropriate way.
5. This motion supports the expansion of the #NoExcuse campaign.
6. This motion supports the University in tackling gender based violence.

Submitted with 20 student signatures by Annabelle Avery in November 2020.