



Student Council Minutes

Thursday 27th February 2020, 6-8pm, Pleasance Upper Hall

1. Accountability

Full Sabbatical Officer Reports can be [found in the papers](#).

Rosheen Wallace, VP Community

Q: Jeremy Pestle: You may be aware that I have a motion later for a representative for commuting students. How have you already been incorporating the needs of these students?

A: This is an area for development. It's not something I've explicitly been working on. I would welcome input if you have experience with this. This is an issue relevant to sabbs across the board, it's not limited to my role.

Q: Last week 13 students were suspended from Stirling University because of the occupation there. Will you stand up for these students and those at the occupation of Appleton Tower?

A: Stephanie Vallancey, VP Education: We have been having conversations with the university and UCU about the strikes and the occupation, and we want to ensure all students are supported. This morning we talked to the Principal about supporting students in the occupation. We are still involved and will make sure students are supported.

RESULT: For – 60.0

Against – 4.0

Abstain – 11.5

Beth Fellows, VP Activities and Services

Q: Jeremy Pestle: What are you doing to represent those societies with no representatives? You said at the last meeting that you'd encourage members to run, but there were only 15 candidates for 12-14 positions and there'll be no new representatives short of October. What happened?

A: I've been working on this with a much broader scope, because I want it not to be that every year that whoever is in my job has leading individuals and encouraging them to run. Students have to want to run. I've been readdressing the framework behind the scenes, asking if this is the right model, how we can get more students involved. There's a gap between engaged societies and elected roles. We will be going out for student consultation once the internal work is done. I'm setting up a bigger scope which will have an impact beyond my term of office.

RESULT: For – 61.5

Against – 3.5

Abstain – 10.5



Andrew Wilson, President

Q: Jeremy Pestle: In February there was a debate on banning beef, and this went to an online ballot which suffered on both sides from false evidence. The online ballot was presented so that students wouldn't know they were voting for feasibility study, not to ban beef. What responsibility do you take for this?

Q: Nathan Zou, Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences Undergraduate School Representative: This is a question about beef-gate, as we call it now. I agree with all that Jeremy said, and I want to express my explicit disappointment in you over this. What are the Students' Association doing to prevent the misrepresentation of online ballots in the future?

A: I take your points, but every student has the responsibility to read the whole motion. Representation and Democracy took questions, and the marketing team aimed to represent the information as well as possible. I'm happy to meet if you wish to express your disappointment in me privately as well as publicly.

Q: David Renton, Part Time Students' Representative: It's great that you've been to a lot of campuses, but in your report there is no mention of the Holyrood Campuses. Do you have plans to do that?

A: Most definitely, I'm keen. I reached out to all elected reps such as yourself and the representative for education and sport. I'm happy to meet to talk about issues and to speak to students more widely.

Q: You talked to hundreds of students about the cost of living. Was it a formal process? Will there be a summary of results?

A: It was informal through conversations and whiteboards. We will be publishing a report on issues and making recommendations to the University.

RESULT: For – 37.0

Against – 20.5

Abstain – 18.0

Stephanie Vallancey, VP Education

Q: Vivek Santyana: Thank you for your work on the strikes. There were emails sent to students when they missed two weeks of classes. This email was friendly for UK and EU students, but was very harsh for international students. This is due to Hostile Environment Policy. What is the Students' Association doing to support international students?

A: This morning we met with the Principal to talk about that issue of how we should support international students. I agree that it needs to be worked on and there's more coming.



Q: Jeremy Pestle: The strikes have begun again, and I think yesterday Appleton Tower was occupied, and the informatics students are very angry and said the strikes had lost their support. They can't easily move because they need equipment inside Appleton. What guidance will you give for these students? What steps can the university take to ensure they can access the equipment they need another way?

A: So far I understand that there's been an open dialogue between those in the occupation and the university. I've not been in all the direct meetings on the issue. I believe students are allowed to enter at their own risk. There have been communications from the School of Informatics to students to support them. The Students' Association have opened up additional study spaces for those wishing to study without crossing the picket line, but I understand we can't provide all the technology that some students need.

RESULT: For – 64.5

Against – 3.5

Abstain – 7.5

Oona Miller, VP Welfare

Q: Jeremy Pestle: This is a reflective question. As you're preparing to hand over to your successor, what will you say about the topics in your manifesto to the person who replaces you? How will the message change between now and when you actually leave?

A: I don't know what will happen over next three months, but I can comment on what I've achieved so far. I would say that the aims of your manifesto will change over year when you realise what's practical as you make plans and make connections. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but when you come in you will have to adapt to the practicalities of the role.

RESULT: For – 63.0

Against – 2.5

Abstain – 10.0

2. Motions and Expenditure Requests

Solidarity with students in Kashmir and on University campuses in India, submitted by Vivek Santayana

Speech for from proposer

I'll begin with a content notice and will pause for those who want to leave, so there's a warning for: police brutality, ethnic cleansing, genocide.

Four students were shot on campuses in New Delhi and the situation has only escalated. A prominent candidate for the assembly started a riot which ended in 27 people being killed. It is a targeted ethnic cleansing. Students were shot by terrorists while police did nothing. Areas in India are under communications black out with no internet or telecommunications. This is distressing to students from India who can't contact family and friends. I ask for your support and solidarity and solidarity.



Questions

Q: Nico Powell: Are there any events we can attend to get more information?

A: One happened yesterday, at a teach out by Talat Ahmed on women's protest in India. Others are being planned by academics from Centre for South Asian Studies and south Asian lecturers. I hope the Students' Association will spread information about these events and help support students.

Q: Rosheen Wallace, VP Community: I just want to ask for clarification about why this is relevant for students at this university? There are awful things happening all over the world - why should we support this particular issue?

A: There are 400 students at this university from South Asia who are all affected by what happens at home. They have friends and family they can't contact, and some know people personally who have been subject to brutality.

Summation

To clarify, there are 400 students from South Asia here who have friends and family being affected. The situation in their home country is distressing. Many haven't heard from friends and family, or know people personally who have been affected. This petition is for support for us and solidarity for students in India. Having solidarity universities all over world gives students in India hope, so we can help peaceful protest against legislation and genocide.

RESULT: PASSES with 98% votes in favour

Votes: For – 68.0

Against – 1.5

Abstain – 6.0

Continue Supporting the University staff in their industrial action, submitted by Vivek Santayana

Speech for from proposer

I won't go over the exact details on this strike, but you can ask me questions and we will continue with updates. We are grateful for Students' Association support on the pickets and in coordinating teach outs, and giving out information for students, and badges. There are details of how the Students' Association can facilitate support. I would draw attention to PhD students who because of scholarships are denied the right to take strike action. They are now allowed to strike, but there are still tutors who aren't recognised as staff. This is a breach of the anti-casualisation policy, and we must lobby the University for Employment Rights.

Questions

Q: Jeremy Lee: There's a clause about the hostile environment policy. Can you give some elaboration on that?



A: There are two issues: in many courses course organisers and lecturers don't see strike solidarity as a good reason for absence, and students are subject to disciplinary action. Students are exempt if their class is cancelled. There is no leeway in some situations, such as with tutors who don't see it as a legitimate reason for absence. Those absences that are problematic for students as the university is implementing the hostile environment policy with no leeway and no adjustment for strike conditions. The problem is how the university is responding to students not attending classes due to the strike.

Q: Nico Powell: Do you think the Students' Association should take a stance on the occupation of Appleton?

A: The occupation is not affiliated with UCU, so that's different to the content of this motion, so is for a separate discussion.

Speech against, Chris Berry

This is a well-intentioned and informed motion, and I can't hope to have the same knowledge on the issue as you do. I only offer what on principle this council should do. I was in a meeting before reading week and there was a senior member of university staff and a member of UCU who said he didn't know what triggered this round of strikes, he wasn't aware of the strikes happening. Different lecturers have different reasons for striking, and it is not a place for this student body to be for or against strikes.

Summation

In response, yes, many have many reasons for going on strike. There are 5 issues at stake in this strike: pay inequality, pensions, increasing workloads, pay devaluation, and casualisation. Different people with different circumstances have different reasons for striking and that's valid. The university hasn't delivered meaningful promises. It is for the student body to decide because their working conditions are our learning conditions. We are doing this for us, for our lecturer, but also for the future of higher education as a whole.

RESULT: PASSES with 92% votes in favour

Votes: For – 65.5

Against – 6.0

Abstain – 4.0

Expenditure Request: Supporting UCU industrial action, submitted by Association Exec

Speech for from proposer

Due to the strike action in November and December we made an expenditure request for £750, but we only used £220, so the rest went back into the pot. This time we are asking for a £250 to supplement. What isn't used will be put back. We'll use it for flyers, coffee, tea, hot water bottles, badges, et cetera.

Summation

What isn't used will go back and you can use it at the next Student Council.



RESULT: PASSES with 84% votes in favour

Votes: For – 40.5

Against – 4.5

Abstain – 4.5

Create a Section Representative post for Students who commute to University, submitted by Jeremy Pestle

Speech for from proposer

Thank you to those who supported me in getting the motion so far. You are voting to have a new representative for commuter students. Commuter Students face extra challenges, which often compound. I want to thank Beth for referring me to research that shows that commuter students are more likely to have protected characteristics, and they are less likely to get a first in their degree. Late evenings are often impractical for commuter students. They need a place at the table for discussion. I have experienced this as I am a former commuter student myself.

Questions

Q: Meyra Coban, BME Officer: where will they fit in the taxonomy of representatives?

A: They will be section representatives.

Q: Harry Banks, Literatures, Languages & Cultures Undergraduate School Representative: There's a part that says that this will refer to students who live at home outside Edinburgh. What about students who live in Edinburgh but far away? Would this section representative represent them?

A: The way I pictured it, it would be if they were unable to get night bus then that would be far away enough to be covered.

Q: Kirsty Munro, Divinity Undergraduate School Representative: Thanks for bringing this motion; I feel underrepresented as a commuter student. Have you considered if there will be undergraduate and postgraduate positions for this?

A: That's not a point I thought of, possibly, yes, because they have different student experiences.

Summation

I would like to take this opportunity to make some extra points. Why not have a commuter student representatives? I have experienced both, and living here is far easier. The only reason I'm not commuting just now is because I'm an RA. Some may ask, 'what if no one runs?'. I'm aware of this risk, but there's no harm in trying. We should never give up in trying to represent students. This motion won't help everyone in the room but it will help some people, so I urge you to support the motion.

RESULT: PASSES with 91% votes in favour

Votes: For – 64.5



Against – 6.0

Abstain – 5.0

Please note this is an extraordinary motion so needs to be passed at two consecutive Student Council meetings to become Students' Association Policy.

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

Speech for from proposer

Last motion, I promise. You can see the room, there's no carpet or curtains. As someone with Asperger's, it is hard for me to be in a room like this. It's hard at this council and at other venues. It's a barrier for students with hearing and sensory needs. I've been able to participate because of these earphones. Providing them would mainstream these needs, making them free means there is no additional cost to students because of their disability.

Questions

Q: David Renton, Part Time Students' Representatives: Why this company? Also, why have you asked for £375 when the current price is £300?

A: This is the only one that offers free shipping to the UK, and I calculated the full price in case we can't order them before the sale ends.

Q: Has there been much research on how much demand there is?

A: Members of my society are affected by this: half of our membership. We had 33 people leave an event due to noise issues in a room.

Q: Jeremy Pestle: Given this funding request is for this year, how quickly can the scheme be rolled out?

A: Fairly quickly if I can order them by end of month. I hope it will roll out by the end of the academic year by the end of May when we can get more information about if we can roll it out more widely.

Summation

They are a measure I've found helpful. People in orchestras use them as well. This is a pilot to see if this type is sufficient. Surplus funds would go back into the budget. The sooner we do it, the cheaper as I don't know how long discount lasts. This will enable students to participate in Student Council and societies. I hope that Oona and her successor can make buildings more accessible too.

RESULT: PASSES with 97% votes in favour

Votes: For – 46.5

Against – 3.0

Abstain – 0



3. AOB

Vivek Santyana: Teach Outs

Lecturers and tutors are organising alternative seminars on issues, topics, and the university experience. You can find details at <https://ucuedinburgh.wordpress.com/>. They exist so that students can continue learning despite the disruption.

Ellen Blunsdon, Disabled Students' Officer

We were recently able to hire a Disability Studies Intern who will develop a module based on student feedback. There'll be focus groups for disabled and able-bodied students about what they think about the module. Details will be posted on liberation Facebook pages. If you come there'll be book vouchers and cake!

Harry Banks, Literatures, Languages & Cultures Undergraduate School Representative

This coming week there is an information session for students going abroad next year about how to deal with issues such as mental health while on a year abroad. It's being hosted in LLC but is open to all students, so come along on Tuesday 3rd March from 5-7pm in the 50 George Square Project Room.

Lapsing Policy

Policy passed by Student Council lapses at the end of the academic year four years after it was originally passed. When they lapse, they will no longer be Students' Association policy.

This year there are [a number of policies due to lapse this year](#).

If you wish to ensure that a policy continues to be in effect you can bring it back to the final student council meeting of this year, which is on Thursday 26th March. You can read the [full text of these policies on our website](#). If you would like more information you can email us at makeachange@eusa.ed.ac.uk.