Student Council

Wednesday 30 October 2019, 6-8pm, Pleasance Theatre

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Accountability
   Paper A
3. Accessibility Break
4. Motions:
   i. Create a sustainable alternative to plastic cups in the student bars and clubs.
      Paper B
   ii. Amendment to the motion: Create a sustainable alternative to plastic cups in the student bars and clubs.
      Paper C
   iii. Motion for Elected Officials’ Transparency and Accountability.
      Paper D
   iv. Amendment to the motion: Motion for Elected Officials’ Transparency and Accountability.
      Paper E
   v. Supporting Students Impacted by Universal Credit.
      Paper F
5. Any Other Business (AOB)
   Shout outs
Paper A: Accountability Reports

Report from Andrew Wilson, President

As your Students’ Association President, I represent students to the University and beyond, as well as leading your Students’ Association in the right direction, here’s what I’ve been up to this month:

Getting In and Getting On
Ensuring that each and every student, regardless of background, can 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

- Continued planning and developing the ‘Money Matters’ project – a body of work focusing on the cost of living in Edinburgh for students and raising awareness of the issue, as well as providing advice for students and highlighting support available
- Fed into the University’s work on changing the Special Circumstances and Extensions process as well as attending the Student Administration and Support Board to shape student support
- Contributed to the University’s work on ‘Size and Shape’ – mapping out what our student population will look like in the years to come
- Attended the University’s Student Experience Action Plan working group to oversee and monitor how the University’s investment in improving student experience is progressing and approving funding for various projects to improve your University experience

A Relevant Students’ Association
Our Students’ Association must be relevant to student life which is why I have:

- Brought back Tennents to our bars – it was tough but we got there
- Explored how we are responding to the climate emergency as a Students’ Association and what steps what already take and could take to be more sustainable
- Ensured the good governance and strategic direction of the Students’ Association through the eyes of a student at various subcommittees and working groups – it’s more interesting than it sounds, promise

Students as Changemakers
As students, we have the power to shape local and national decisions, here’s what I’ve been doing to facilitate that:

- Planned and launched a Register to Vote campaign – it is important that all students are registered in light of an inevitable General Election to ensure that we have a say on our future, I co-ordinated an effort across all University campuses to get students registered
- Contributed to the planning of the CGIU 2020 meeting being held in Edinburgh next year! This is a great opportunity for any future leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs at our University and I will be continuing to help shape the event programme for students
- Continued to work closely with For Our Future’s Sake, the youth and student movement for a People’s Vote, to encourage students to take part in the conversations around Brexit – I even travelled down to London to march with over a million people on ‘Super Saturday’!

How can the University improve student experience? What should the Students’ Association be doing for students? – Got answers? Get in contact, I always want to hear from you! Email me at president@eusa.ed.ac.uk or find me in Potterrow!
Report from Beth Fellows, Vice President Activities and Services

October has been such an exciting month for me, I have had three of my projects start including the free yoga, the Zero Waste shop and the Wednesday afternoon survey. It has also seen the views and engagement with the #WeAreEdinburgh profiles increase.

Increase Participation and Communication

- I have set up meetings with Information Services to discuss getting big events that happen every year in students’ outlook calendars, such as the History months, Give it a Go and Student Elections. These will also include links in their description to event pages. In addition, I am also in the process of getting a notification to pop up in students’ MyEd page during the Student Elections as an ‘action to do’ to try encourage more engagement with our elections.
- The Wednesday afternoon survey has been sent out from Week 5 and is staying open until 1st November. This survey is trying to gauge the appetite for keeping Wednesday afternoons free from curriculum to participate in society and club activities, catch up on work and life administration or even just take time for yourself as often students work a 7 day week on their studies. This survey is really important because it could result in the changing of this timetabling policy so if you have not already please fill it in.
- #Take ten has come back from Marketing with an interactive planner for the week with activities that fall under the five ways to wellbeing so keep your eyes peeled for the launch in Mental Health and Wellbeing week in just 2 weeks’ time. I am keen for as many people, societies, clubs and groups to get involved, share it and do some of the activities. The aim of this planner is not just to use it during this week but have it as something you can dip in and out of as and when you feel like it. I am also talking to Communications and Marketing and Information Services to get them to also help spread the word.
- I am starting the first stages of planning a Schools cup day potentially in something fun and inclusive such as dodgeball for next Semester.

Improving Services

- The Zero Waste shop has been opened and is already expanding in its product range, so please bring your containers along and take a look. It’s in the David Hume Tower shop behind the café. Thank you for everyone who has been already and we really appreciate any feedback you have on this so we can keep improving this service to students and staff.
- The free yoga service has begun with good uptake and I am now in conversations with sponsorship and advertising to try make sure this service is lasting and sustainable for years to come and ensure it does not just stop but actually keeps expanding.
- I am currently in conversation to try gain student opinion on what our food outlets should be providing for students in all our buildings.

Celebrating Students

- The #WeAreEdinburgh profiles continue, having covered the themes of Black History Month and Sustainability in October and I look forward to hearing from two students who are going to be talking about men’s mental health and Disability History Month as part of November’s profiles.
- I am going to begin to work on the Student Awards with the Activities team as the nominations will be opening in December so will be spending a lot of time on that in the next month.
Report from Rosheen Wallace, Vice President Community

Zero Waste shop
This month kicked off with the opening of the Zero Waste Corner in David Hume tower shop. This is a section of the shop selling cheap dried food items in bulk such as lentils, rice, dried fruit and nuts as well as things like reusable chilli water bottles and soap bars. I spent the day on campus and in the shop, it was overall a great day with loads of people excited and interested in going along to try it out! Since then a couple of additional items have been added so I’m hoping that it will continue to be successful and the corner can be expanded! (The spiced chickpeas are my personal fave)

Sustain.ED festival
This month has been a busy one for sustainability-related projects, as I also hosted the Sustain.ED festival on the 22nd of October. It was a hectic but exciting day with everything from reuse workshops, meditation sessions to sculpture making using plastic bottles, ending with a panel discussion where I hosted a lively discussion around solutions to the plastic problem. A lot of time this month was spend planning for this event so I’m really pleased at how it turned out and how many people got involved on the day – and a special thank you to the Students and Societies who got involved in running events and helped make it happen!

University committees
I attended a couple of interesting committees including the Sustainability strategy advisory group (sustainability again soz), the KB Nucleus project board where we talked about exciting things like the importance of plugs in study spaces, as well as Annual Registration Project board, where I highlighted the importance and benefits of implementing Automatic voter registration when students register at the start of the academic year (something Georgie worked on a lot last year and I am keen to continue pushing for!). I also went along to vet school council and it was great to see so many vets engaging with their school, so shout out to any vets for having a fab school council system!

Speaking at key events
This month I also spoke at a couple of key university events including a welcome event hosted by the sustainability department (who are launching a sustainability champions network). I also got the chance to speak at the University’s general council meeting, where I spoke to Edinburgh Alumni about my priorities and objectives for the year.

And that’s been October for me, happy to answer any questions!
Feedback

- One of my priorities this year was to address feedback.
- Working with Surveys/Data University people to look at CEQs (Course Enhancement Questionnaires), if these are relevant and fit for purpose.
- Looking at all the current methods for gathering feedback and the best ways to enhance these and make sure they are fit for purpose.
- Attended Support for Curriculum Development Group (Formally Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Group) where we are discussing the best mechanisms for developing and enhancing curriculum and assessment methods.

Student Support/Personal Tutor Review

- We have finished up the consultation process just this week, with workshops on all campuses, pop up stands and more! There has been some great discussion and input from students on all the future potential models!
- After all the feedback is gathered and collated together a final model will be proposed in a full business case to the Universities Education Committee (and other big committees) in December. Following approval, further work will be going into how this will now adapt into practice for (hopefully) the next academic year 20/21.

School Reps

- Had our first School Rep Forum (YAY!), where we met for the first time and were able to hear and discuss everyone’s objectives for the upcoming year.
- Currently working on School Rep Handbook and further enhancing the support we are able to provide for our school reps to achieve their own priorities.

Kings College SSLC

- Working with Student Experience at CSE- creating a College wide SSLC (one for Taught so UG and PGT, and one for PGR students)
  - This is a place for students in CSE to address relevant issues, with relevant university staff there to respond to this!
- This is an incredibly exciting pilot- and will hopefully be a standing item that reoccurs each semester.

Other

- Just had our Postgraduate Elections, congrats to everyone who has been elected!!
- Lecture Recording Project has come to a close, with an Opt-Out policy for all eligible lectures. Which also means- if your lecture is not being recorded students must be informed of this! If it isn’t, just ask, or raise it to us.
Report from Oona Miller, Vice President Welfare

At time of writing, I only have about two weeks of work to update on, due to annual leave and some scheduling changes for October Student Council. As such, this update will be a little lighter than usual!

Committing to Campus Accessibility
- Took a tour of the University estate covering George Square, Bristo Square, Chambers Street and Moray House areas with the Estates Department Head of Small Projects and Minor Works (oversees all refurbishments which take place to improve access and egress provisions) to better understand existing improvements, and the restrictions that often complicate their ability to make retrospective improvements
- Discussed history of central disability policy (or lack thereof) with University senior leadership, and got the go-ahead to set up an exploratory group with the aim of creating such a policy
- Next steps: have first meeting with staff and student stakeholders about disability policy

Fostering a Compassionate University Community
- Was briefed on a ‘Compassion Convivium’ which a member of Students’ Association staff was able to attend in my absence
- Received confirmation of funding for three Sexual Violence Liaison Officers, an online Report and Support platform, and training packages for both staff and students (!!!) – slightly less recently the University’s web guidance for staff on supporting students through sexual violence disclosures has been updated (also guidance for students who have experienced or been accused of sexual violence)
- Next steps: kicking off planning for a week of celebrating and educating on all things sexual health in Semester 2 with Andrew

Tackling Elitism and Building Inclusivity
- Hosted Tackling Elitism which was a huge success – I am happy to share key themes that came from the evening with anyone who is interested; now moving on to organising regular meetings with students who signed up and identifying key areas of focus
- Will shortly attend antisemitism training along with other Sabbatical Officers and Liberation Officers; developing relationship with Jewish Society and national organisations like UJS to address how we can better support Jewish students on campus and tackle the problem of antisemitism which has been on the rise in UK universities in recent years
- Next steps: looking forward to the first meeting of a newly convened Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee which sits under the University Executive and will be influential in streamlining and collating EDI work across the University community

Other
- Beginning regular meetings with new VP Students, Colm Harmon, alongside rest of the Sabbatical team, where we will discuss the student experience at large – with a specific focus on what is so valuable about ‘the Edinburgh experience/degree/graduate’
Paper B: Create a sustainable alternative to plastic cups in the student bars and clubs.

What we will do:
1. Stop using single use plastic cups in all Students’ Association bars and clubs.

Background to this:
1. With the harmful effects of single use plastics so widely known now, I don’t think we should be using any at all. Getting rid of plastic cups in the bars and clubs would be a step in the right direction.
2. We dump eight million tonnes of plastic into the sea every year which is disastrous for marine life. Countless whales, turtles and seabirds have been found dead with stomachs full of plastic. In addition, plastic debris can get lodged in coral and affect the health of reefs.
3. Only 14% of global plastic packaging is recycled.
4. Last year the University of Edinburgh signed the ‘New Plastics Economy’ Global Commitment. This shows that the University cares about changing the way we use plastics for the better.

Beliefs and motivating actions:
1. We should all be doing more to combat Climate Change, including reducing our plastic use since it plays such a huge role the destruction of our planet.
2. At student events drinks are nearly always served in plastic cups and every time someone buys a new drink there's a new plastic cup.
3. Glass isn’t a practical option but the Student’s Union should be looking for more sustainable alternatives to single use plastics.
4. Seeing the stairs at the Big Cheese completely covered in plastic cups and bottles that people had thrown away, was one of the main reasons for writing this motion.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures.
Paper C: Amendment to the motion: Create a sustainable alternative to plastic cups in the student bars and clubs.

The following amendments were submitted regarding the above motion.

Clause 1 of ‘What we will do’ has been reworded, clauses 2 and 3 have been added to ‘What we will do,’ and clause 5 of ‘Background to this’ has been added.

What we will do:
1. We will eliminate all unnecessary single-use plastic cups in all Students’ Association bars and clubs.
2. Single-use plastic cups will remain in use and on display for those who need them. There will be no tolerance of staff or the public questioning why people choose plastic cups over other options.
3. In searching for an alternative to single-use plastic cups, we will be mindful of the needs of disabled people and take into account their needs.

Background to this:
5. Disabled people often rely on single-use plastic cups due to their lightweight design and the hypoallergenic nature of plastic. To remove single-use plastic cups from Students’ Association venues would prevent disabled people from being able to use Students’ Association venues.

Submitted by Ellen Blundson, Disabled Students Officer.
Paper D: Motion for Elected Officials’ Transparency and Accountability.

What we will do:

1. For future student council meetings beginning in January 2020, record the individual votes of Sabbatical Officers and Elected Representatives by having members of the Representation and Democracy Team write the names and positions of Officers and Representatives on their yellow ballot papers which are handed out at the start of each session.
2. When the ballots are counted after each session by the Representation and Democracy Team, all FOR, AGAINST, and ABSTAIN votes (or absence) of each Officer and Representative, for all motions and accountability reports, will be tabulated into a spreadsheet or table, like below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>position</th>
<th>motion 1</th>
<th>motion 2</th>
<th>motion 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jimmyjohn Smith</td>
<td>Sab Officer</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>against</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malida F. Buttersworth</td>
<td>Society Rep</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>against</td>
<td>abstain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Marx</td>
<td>School Rep</td>
<td>against</td>
<td>against</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zelda Edmund Fitzgerald</td>
<td>Society Rep</td>
<td>absent</td>
<td>absent</td>
<td>absent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. A table of votes such as this will be published on the EUSA website alongside the overall vote results

Background to this:

1. Several other UK universities’ student unions have adopted similar motions to publish the vote results of elected officers and representatives; we have specifically modelled this motion and the format of our results presentation on the system in use for several years at the student unions of Saint Andrews University and Cambridge University.

Beliefs and motivating actions:

1. Our primary motivation in submitting this motion is to ensure that students and societies have access to the voting record of Sabbatical Officers and Elected Representatives.
2. This encourages elected officials to vote in a way that is consistent with their manifesto items, which is especially important because the votes of Officers and Elected Reps are weighted 1.5x as much as other students’ votes, with the explicit justification that they are tasked with voting on behalf of the interests of their student constituencies.
3. In general, publishing elected officials’ voting records seems to be in line with best democratic practice in any Student Union or similar organization, and has worked well in the Student Unions at other UK universities.
4. It is within EUSA’s own regulations that there ought to be a closer connection between constituent and representative. Part 6, Section G, subsection ii of the student democracy regulations states that “Elected members of Student Council shall consult their student constituents on motions and issues to be voted on at Student Council in order to represent their views.” There is clear scope for accountability within this democratic process, which will be heightened by the passing of this motion.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures.
Paper E: Amendment to the motion: Motion for Elected Officials’ Transparency and Accountability.

The following amendments were submitted regarding the above motion.

Clause 1 of ‘What we will do’ has been reworded and Clauses 1i, 3i and 4 have been added. Clause 5 of ‘Background to this’ has been added.

What we will do:

1. The Students’ Association Representation and Democracy team will record the individual votes of Sabbatical Officers and Elected Representatives on accountability reports and motions
   i. The method for collecting data on individual voting records will be subject to consultation coordinated by Representation and Democracy

3. Under the table:
   i. The method of publication and distribution will be subject to consultation coordinated by Representation and Democracy.

4. The full implementation of paragraphs 1-3 will not take place until Representation and Democracy have written a clear and publicly available procedure which sets out how the Students’ Association will support Elected Representatives to manage their public profile in light of this accountability mechanism.

Background to this:

5. The Students’ Association Safe Space Policy aims to ‘create an environment in which all students, staff and visitors feel welcome, respected, and able to fully participate in our events activities’ - as such, accountability structures must not problematise the ability of Elected Representatives to fulfil their democratic responsibilities.

Submitted by Association Executive.
Paper F: Supporting Students Impacted by Universal Credit.

What we will do:

1. To endorse and support the open letter on Universal Credit (UC)
2. To support further action working towards the aims of the open letter,
3. To support the Sabbatical officers in continuing collaborations to campaign against the issue.
   a. Support affected students who lack funding and/or other resources.
   b. Explicitly push the Department of Work and Pensions to change how UC impacts on students, working with NUS Scotland, the Scottish Government and those representatives who are supportive of our aims to do so.
   c. Improve awareness, among staff and students, of the challenges UC currently poses to students, so as to meet the likely increased need for support as more students switch over to the new benefits system
   d. Encourage all students who have been impacted by Universal Credit to contact the Sabbatical Officers in order to add their testimony to the campaign.

Background to this:

1. Universal Credit (UC) came into effect in 2013 and is a consolidation of the UK benefits system. It replaces: Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and Working Tax Credit.
2. UC encompasses multiple benefits which did not take into account student income in their previous form.
3. UC deducts student income £ for £. Conversely, UC deducts earned income 63p for £.
4. Student loans and other unearned income comes under ‘student income’.
5. Last year, Students Associations around Scotland initiated a campaign against the above, involving petitions, open letters, and lobbying of representatives.
6. 21 Universities and Colleges in Scotland have signed up to the above campaign.
7. The NUS (Scotland) has crafted workshops for its members specifically to brief them on UC and provide them resources for their own campaigns.

Beliefs and motivating actions:

1. UC has fundamentally disregarded students.
2. UC definitions and calculations of student income can leave students struggling to cover living expenses, to then consider the cost of studying at University additionally.
3. The aforementioned circumstances primarily affect students from Widening Access and Participation backgrounds, mature students, students with dependents and students with disabilities.
4. The fact that student finance varies between countries exacerbates this, leading to students from different parts of the UK with similar loans and grants ending up with UC payments of wildly different sizes.
5. The status quo puts at risk diversity at Universities and Colleges around Scotland.
6. Currently, the issue is not being given the attention it deserves by the national press and politicians.

Submitted by Association Executive.