

Students' Union Trustee Board

Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board
Tuesday 24th November 2020 – Via Zoom, 18:00

Present:

Megan Price (Chair and President) – MP
Harry South (VP Education) – HS
Tish Manning (VP Student Activities) - TM
Margaret Jolley (Lay Trustee) – MJ
Melanie Brittain (Lay Trustee) - MB
Rebekah Williams (Lay Trustee) – RW
Deborah Andrews (Student Trustee) – DA
Andrew Humphry (Student Trustee) – AH
Isobel Lines (Student Trustee) - IL

In attendance:

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) - SW
Samina Fiaz (SU HR & Admin Coordinator, also Minute Secretary) – SF

1. Attendance and Apologies

No apologies received.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Matters arising

An existing WhatsApp group for Student and Officer Trustees had been established and seemed to be working well. Lay Trustees have opted not to join the group so all key communications between Trustees would continue to be communicated via email.

RW had researched funding available via Sport England and shared some information with the board. The information would be emailed to SW who would liaise with the Sport Coordinator to pursue this further, where appropriate.

SW had liaised with the Student Engagement team regarding a presentation in the January board meeting so plans were in place for this to go ahead.

4. Declarations or conflicts of interest/ Register of declarations of interest

None declared.

5. Chief Executive Officer Report

SW updated the board on key SU activities as follows:

- 5.1 SU finances were being managed carefully and whilst income was reduced due to the impact of two lock downs, expenditure was also down. SW explained that the SU were lucky in that they did not rely too heavily on commercial income and whilst some other SU's were having to issue redundancies and make significant changes to the way they operated, the SU was currently in a healthy position comparatively. The finance and HR subcommittees had discussed further ways to save money and ensure efficiencies wherever possible.
- 5.2 SW and Stephen Anderson (Knox Cropper) had attended the University's Audit and Risk Committee, which had gone well. SW had responded to a range of questions relating to the advice service, levels of student engagement, the pension scheme and the level of the SU's block grant. The committee were very complimentary about the SU team and the development and growth seen from the SU in recent years.
- 5.3 The SU's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group had been set back somewhat due to the ongoing impact of Covid and resulting lock down and so work would resume next semester. The university were also keen to develop an inclusivity action plan via their own EDI committee in which the SU would also be involved.
- 5.4 The HR and Finance subcommittees had discussed and agreed a plan to furlough all staff members (with the exception of the CE) at varying points in December, in a bid to save money and claw back some of the losses, including the sponsorship income, as well as to save jobs going forward. Although the SU are in a better position financially compared to some other SU's, it was important at this stage to save money wherever possible. The SU would continue to provide services to students who would remain the priority, with the Business Continuity Plan reflecting this and being updated almost weekly. Furlough leave would be flexible, to ensure staff can be called back if necessary. The University will be kept abreast of the SU's plans in this respect.
- 5.5 It is anticipated that the Leadership Elections could be busy in March with more students potentially running for the Officer roles due to a challenging graduate job market.
- 5.6 The Advice service continued to do well, taking a more personalised approach in promoting the advisor herself, which appeared to be working well in attracting students to the service.
- 5.7 There were some concerns about Societies and keeping them motivated and engaged during the pandemic due to limits on student activities. Sports clubs appeared not to be as badly affected and most have continued with activities on-line and face to face where possible. In discussion with the Sports Development Board, the SU had decided to withdraw from BUCS for the remainder of the academic year. It was felt this was the right approach to manage student expectations and to keep safe. Instead, it is hoped to facilitate friendlies, internal competitions, a physical Battle of the Sports and some form of Varsity with the University of Gloucestershire. It was felt that remaining in BUCS would result in many cancellations and 'walkovers', the latter of which may still be charged, and the SU pulled out before the deadline when it would be fined for doing so. Other Universities, such as Coventry have done the same and other SUs have intimated

to SW that they are being required to stay in BUCS by their institutions more for political reasons and a fear of a negative response. Overall, UW students have responded very well to the decision and shown a lot of understanding. One or two teams have queried the decision but we have communicated further with them on the reasons and the mitigations we hope to put in place.

- 5.8 Marketing and engagement was going well with the website traffic doing well, compared to the same time last year.
- 5.9 Staff had been doing well to adapt to the regularly changing government guidance and it was worth noting that Worcester students had been very responsible and reasonable in their response to lock down restrictions. UW has, so far, not experienced some of the serious issues seen at some other universities.

6. Monthly Management Accounts – October 2020

- 6.1 Income was down but so was expenditure. No areas for concern, the management accounts look healthy with no cause for concern at present.

7. Risk Register and Safeguarding policy

- 7.1 The safeguarding policy was now attached to the risk register.
- 7.2 A number of changes have been made to the risk register this year, some of which are risks related to Covid-19 and some related to other things.
- 7.3 SW updated the board on the key changes to the risk register.
- 7.4 Regarding the safeguarding policy, which, along with a related Whistleblowing Policy, has been shared with staff.
- 7.5 RW gave an overview of the The Anncraft Trust, which supports safeguarding adults in sport and provided website details for SU staff to explore further, as and when required.
- 7.6 It was suggested that the safeguarding policy should be added to new staff inductions and, also, staff should be given regular reminders around procedures in relation to safeguarding.
Action: SF to add safeguarding policy to new staff induction checklist and ensure an annual update for existing staff.
- 7.7 The board approved the risk register.

8. Annual statement of Legal Compliance

SW explained that this is a relatively new document, which was first brought to the Board in May 2020, as another means of reassurance for Trustees. The statement details how the SU is meeting its legal requirements in relation to several areas, including Charity law, HR law, Health and Safety etc. It is a useful tool for management to ensure that the SU is keeping on top of its' legal responsibilities. This would be reviewed annually in the November trustee board meetings.

9. Matrix of delegated responsibility

Minor amendments had been made to the matrix of delegated responsibility which SW explained to the board, mainly related to the recent governance review. The board approved the matrix of delegated responsibility.

10. Draft annual Impact Report 2019/20

Preparation of the impact report had been delayed due to Covid and the furloughing of student staff and so would not be ready before Christmas. It will be a priority to finalise and distribute to all stakeholders in the new year.

11. Board Sub-committees

11.1 HS updated the board on key discussions from the HR subcommittee which included:

- Probationary reviews for new staff who had been furloughed had been extended.
- Staff furlough plans.

11.2 MP updated the board on key discussions from the finance subcommittee included:

- The management accounts were discussed.
- Impact of Covid-19 and efficiencies that can be made as a result of the impact this has had financially, including plans around furloughing staff.

12. Officers' report

HD, MP and TM updated the board on various recent SU activities, as follows:

- MP had worked with the African Caribbean Society to ensure Black History month went as smoothly as possible and it had been a very successful event.
- MP had partnered with the University's Wellbeing Champions on World Mental Health day, promoting tips for wellbeing to members.
- HS had been working with School and Course Reps, as well as Education Council. Repstival was going ahead in a slightly amended format due to lockdown and had seemed to be going well, with good engagement from Course Reps in the virtual sessions.
- The Ideas Forum had replaced Change Week and engagement had been better than expected, with plans already underway to implement some of the ideas suggested, such as around University catering. The ideas are initially discussed at Executive Committee and then go to Student Council if they are deemed to have a material interest to the wider student body, would affect any of the governance structures or documents of the SU. If they have a significant financial impact, ideas will, also come to the Trustee Board for discussion.
- Battle of the Sports was moved online, with 17 teams competing. Discussions were under way with the University of Gloucestershire regarding Varsity which it is hoped can go ahead without spectators and be live streamed for students.
- RAG week took place and Movember is currently going well with over £7K raised so far.
- Online events had been taking place as part of Geek Week.
- The first ever TeamWorc Action day had gone ahead, with a litter pick undertaken along the canal. An allotment day is planned, which will also help to meet some of the SU's sustainability goals.

- The annual shoe box appeal couldn't go ahead so a food bank donation box has been set up instead.
- A chat service had been set up for students as a way to support students with their mental health and wellbeing. Students are able to request for a call back from the SU and Officers have already spoken to a few students whom they have been able to refer to further sources of help, such as the Digital Hardship Fund.
- With lectures going online, HS has been busy with academic queries and journals from Reps.
- At a BUCS online meeting recently, it was apparent that TM was the only Officer who had been working on various activities for students; many other Officers had seemed not have initiated anything in terms of activities for students and many students were not very active, whether on-line or face-to-face. SW commended the Officers for the work they had been doing as WSU had clearly been giving students a better experience than in some other institutions.
- The Networks are developing well and being encouraged to collaborate and to work on campaigns for next semester. Some are more established than others and MP and the student engagement team are working with those who are facing more challenges to grow numbers and establish plans. Overall, things were definitely positive and as a result a more diverse range of students were engaged in networks. Their membership was growing and they were moving in the right direction. They were embracing a student-led approach and giving the Officers access to a much wider range of opinions, intelligence, and student experiences.

13. Welcome Week Report (including member survey)

The Welcome Week survey response was lower than last year and it was felt this was largely down to timing and needed to have gone out earlier than it did. However, more first year students responded than did last year (when proportionally more second and third years did) which was encouraging.

Welcome Weekend had been very well attended and feedback had been very positive so that many students have asked for a similar event next year.

Engagement with interest lists (for sports clubs and societies) exceeded expectations and Welcome Fair really helped to impact this. It was fed back that it was a safe and happy event. Students have also reported wanting to see more online events, so this would continue to happen and would reach many more students too. The Wonkhe national retention survey had received over 700 responses from UW which was a fabulous response rate (the next highest response rate from a much bigger University was around 170 responses). The findings from this are being analysed and will be reported to the University through the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

14. Executive Committee minutes

Two meetings have been held. Poetry, Nursing, St John Ambulance and the Art Collective societies have been approved. Archery society is awaiting approval. Ideas from the Ideas forum which have been approved include a more diverse food range (catering), breakfast wraps, a recycling scheme and supplying lanyards for students who are exempt from wearing a mask.

15. Student Council Summary

Student Council was well attended with some good input. Two positions remain vacant (representatives from UWIC and faith and cultural societies). The officer objectives had been approved and Officers have given updates on the work of the sub-committees of the Council. Discussion points within the meeting included, accommodation, teaching, facilities, sport and extra-curricular and value for money and points and comments made by the committee have been fed back to the University through various meetings, including the Covid Safety Management Group. The next Student Council meeting date had been brought forward to ensure a good turnout, while students are still on campus.

16. Board of Governors summary

An update was given on discussions at the last Board of Governors meeting. Discussions included post qualification admissions and potential impact of Covid on recruitment. The importance and impact of digital communication was recognised and that investing in technology, such as apps, in the future would be beneficial and could be embedded in student learning. Commuter students may particularly benefit from this initiative. The SU was praised for its report and its services to students, as well as worcester students themselves. SW now sits on the University Leadership group, following her objectives review. [Commercial in confidence].

17. Any Other Business

None

Date of next meeting: 26th January 2021

Summary of Actions:

Action	For	To be completed by
Add safeguarding policy to new staff induction checklist and ensure an annual refresher for staff	SF	ASAP