

Students' Union Trustee Board

Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board
Tuesday 25th January 2022 – Via MS Teams, 18:00

Present:

Liam Lees (Chair and President) – LL
Ragnar Mularczyk (VP Education) – RM
Neve Ricketts (VP Student Activities) – NR
Margaret Jolley (Lay Trustee) – MJ
Melanie Brittain (Lay Trustee) – MB
Rebekah Williams (Lay Trustee) – RW
Andrew Humphry (Student Trustee) – AH

In attendance:

Sophie Williams (SU Chief Executive) - SW
Samina Fiaz (SU HR & Admin Coordinator, also Minute Secretary) – SF
Kate Gynn (SU Academic & Welfare Advisor) – KG, *for item 5*
Tom Mandall (SU Advice & Welfare Assistant) – TM, *for item 5*

1. Attendance and Apologies

Apologies received for Matthew Osborne (Student Trustee) – MO

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Matters arising

There was only one action from the last meeting which had been completed:
SF to invite the Academic & Welfare Advisor and her assistant to the next board meeting.

4. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest (including Register of declarations of Interest)

None declared.

5. Presentation from Student Advice and Welfare Team

The Academic and Welfare Advisor and the Advice and Welfare Assistant had been invited to attend the board meeting to present on the SU Advice Service. The presentation included:

- Help and Advice report (case load statistics)
- How accessible the service is
- Wellbeing initiatives
- What next for the service

The presentation was comprehensive, providing an excellent insight into the work of the Advice Service. The board appreciated and thanked the Academic and Welfare Advisor and the Advice and Welfare Assistant for the presentation.

Both leave the meeting.

6. Chief Executive Officer Report

SW updated the board on key SU matters as follows:

- 6.1 The budget submission – the regular quarterly meeting was held with the University’s Director and Assistant Director of Finance and it was noted that there is real concern over student numbers at the University. At University Leadership Group (ULG), which SW attends, it was declared, for the first time in several years, that the University student numbers had fallen below 10K students. Course promotion, clearing and other initiatives have already begun, to address the concerns as soon as possible. The SU have offered their support strategically with trying to engage and increase student numbers.
- 6.2 The pay and reward review is progressing well, a full update to be provided later in the meeting.
- 6.3 The Bar is doing OK, despite a little setback when the government announced Plan B before Christmas. There is a lively atmosphere in the Hangar in the daytime, with many students visiting the Hangar in the day. Ideas are being discussed within the team to introduce a smoothie Bar in the Hangar, as a means to provide a healthy, different option for students and more income for the SU. Research is underway with other Unions and outlets and it will also be subject to conversations with the University re catering.
- 6.4 Sport is going well, but were still dealing with the Football club due to ongoing conduct issues.
- 6.5 Varsity planning is going very well, especially due to there being a new Chief Executive at Gloucester, who appeared to be well-engaged with Varsity planning and is keen on working together with Worcester SU to deliver a collaborative event.
- 6.6 The Rowing club were currently going to Stourport Rowing club for training. Worcester Rowing club had asked for the club to return to training at their facilities following what they state is an earlier break down in their relationship with the University. Nothing had been finalised with regards to this and discussions were ongoing.
- 6.7 Volunteering – new opportunities were being progressed via Maggs Day Care and The Forge.
- 6.8 Networks – there were now more committee members but general engagement had not been at the level compared to last year.
- 6.9 The Welcome Desk had been doing very well, with great student staff on board.
- 6.10 Elections planning was well under way with lots of work on nominations and targeted work in schools where interest in elections was traditionally lower.
- 6.11 The EDI working group continued to meet and SW was meeting with BAME Recruitment to discuss inclusive recruitment. At its last meeting the working

group also discussed ways to improve inclusivity in the Hangar and progress on the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pledge.

7. Monthly Management Accounts (December 2021)

- 7.1 The Accounts were discussed and approved at the Finance committee.
- 7.2 The board approved the accounts.

8. Operational Plan 2021/22

- 8.1 There was a new style of operational plan for the SU. Progress was percentaged against achievement in the new plan.
- 8.2 SW explained the progress to date in different departments/areas of the plan.
- 8.3 Progress on volunteering and employability had been slow, which had always been the case due to other projects taking priority and time and resource constraints. It was suggested that external grants should be sought to try and fund some of the work which is outstanding, such as volunteering and sustainability.
- 8.4 SW proposed to extend the current 12-month operational plan for another academic year as progress on a new 3-5 year strategic plan had been limited. SW was currently undertaking an ILM 7 course (which has a lot of focus on strategic planning) which she is due to complete in December 2022. The course is proving very valuable and supporting SW in her thinking about a longer-term plan for the Union. In addition, a new strategic plan should only be devised after consultation with students. Whilst emerging from a pandemic, student engagement had been poor and so there were concerns about whether student consultation now would be fruitful if done internally. SW suggested including in the budget submission, a proposal for investing in outsourcing market research on students, which more and more SU's were now doing. If approved, this could help ensure that a new strategic plan would be led by data and feedback from students. SW asked the board to consider the above and perhaps agree a way forward at the next board meeting.
- 8.5 The board approved the operational plan.

9. Budget Submission 2022/23 and Pay and Reward Review

Discussions with Atkinson HR had been progressing well. The SU had sent a range of documents (such as job descriptions, salaries, and staff benefits) for review to Vicky Hossack, the consultant leading the project. One-to-one sessions had been arranged for Vicky to meet with staff. A total of 10 staff had agreed to meet with Vicky and they had been sent briefing documents to help them prepare for their meeting. SW explained how the pay and reward review would be fed back to the Trustee Board, via an extraordinary meeting of the HR Subcommittee (with a report and recommendations) and then feedback to the Board at the next full meeting in March.

10. Board Sub-committees

- 10.1 The finance subcommittee had convened, with discussions mainly focussed on the management accounts and the 2022/23 budget submission, student numbers, and the potential new smoothie offer.

10.2 The HR subcommittee had met earlier. RM updated the board on discussions which included:

- Current staffing issues and probationary periods for four new staff members.
- The pay and reward review process was outlined.
- A menopause policy and associated documents had been shared with the committee for review and some changes were suggested to make the policy more inclusive and also to ensure conversations around the menopause were individual led.
- A draft Student/staff relationships policy was shared with the committee with amendments suggested.
- An update on progress on Staff Savvy.

11. Officers' report

RM, LL and NR updated the board on activities to date, as follows:

- Supporting students in the Christmas holiday period, particularly international students who may not have been able to return home due travel restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19.
- The University EDI committee had met for the first time and discussed its' remit. Discussions also commenced on how diverse the curriculum was and how accessible the University website was. LL was very pleased to be a part of the committee, about which he felt very positive.
- Engagement with the networks had been quite difficult despite the SU's efforts. The SU would continue to try new ideas to engage the networks and also planned to contact other SUs with networks to compare experiences.
- Welfare and Inclusion Council – a first in-person meeting was held. Discussions included gender neutral toilets, Black History Month, lecture capture and the REACH scheme. The meeting was good despite attendance, which could have been better.
- A wellness day was hosted and was a huge success with over 600 students attending. The whole SU team got involved and the event included pets for therapy (dogs), an LGBTQ+ stand, stands around sexual and mental health, as well as a few sports clubs seeking new members.
- School reps – two more had been appointed and there had been one withdrawal which was replaced immediately.
- Course rep training – still trying to push for 70% trained course reps. There was a re-launch of school and course 'rep of the month' for November and the recipients were very appreciative of their nominations.
- Education Council – the 3rd meeting of the year was held yesterday. Some early analysis of the timetabling and lecture capture survey had been conducted and reported back, with further detailed analysis to be conducted. The survey would close at the end of the week with a last push for participants currently taking place.
- Learning spaces were being developed at the University and RM was working with the Director of IT, to push forward the refurbishment of the Peirson study centre, re-evaluating the current space to make it more student friendly. The group was

- was working with an external company regarding a new design and colour schemes.
- Some work had been conducted with the Timetabling team to provide room availability to students, who may need to attend online lectures but not have a private space to do so. A new system will be launched via the student portal, MyDay and is expected to be well-utilised and appreciated by students.
 - The SU was continuing to support paramedic students with issues on their course around staff shortages etc and were pleased with the response from the Head of School.
 - 2315 volunteering hours had been logged so far, mainly through committee positions and volunteer roles. The SU would continue to support students to help log their volunteering hours, as these were recorded on their academic transcript upon completion of their studies. Student Volunteering week would take place in February.
 - The RAG total was currently at £18,000.
 - Team Worc Council had met just before December, with a very productive meeting and good engagement. Items approved included a discussion on the relevance of committee roles and a policy was being submitted to change the roles and get student feedback on this. There was also a discussion on the format of 'colours' etc to be awarded in Celebration Week.
 - Worc Hard Play Hard is an online blog, which would be launched next month and students were being asked to submit their clubs and societies achievements so these could be showcased via the online blog.
 - #NeverOK campaign – Gloucester SU have also adopted #NeverOK. This campaign will be promoted at Varsity. Some rules have also been created to promote the Active Bystander in Sport initiative.
 - Sixways Stadium – the SU met with them last week and is considering going into partnership with them. The proposal was to host Rugby Varsity and TeamWorc Awards at Sixways rugby stadium. Additional opportunities with such a partnership included volunteering opportunities as well as Bar jobs for students and a 'home' for American Football who currently had nowhere to play. All in all, a deal would represent potential cost savings for the Union, as opposed to direct income, with a reasonable fee being proposed.

12. Executive Committee summary

Last week's Executive Committee covered the National Student Strike – the impact on Worcester students was likely to be minimal as it was taking place during Progression Week at the University.

A national seminar was held by NUS in relation to a pledge to be signed against NDA's (Non-Disclosure Agreements) whereby all Chief Executives of Universities across the country would be written to, to ask them to sign the pledge. The pledge is known by #BuildTrustNotSilence. The Officers are to raise this with the VC with the aim that he will sign the pledge on behalf of the University.

13. Student Council Summary

Student Council had convened. The annual accounts were approved as well as two policies – the EDI training policy and the International Student Accommodation for Families policy.

There was consultation with student members on tackling low student engagement, as well as updates on student issues and addressing the government Plan B (Covid-19).

14. Board of Governors summary

The Board of Governors had not convened since the last full board meeting. However, a development session for Governors had been held recently to discuss various initiatives the University is considering moving forwards, including matters around Sustainability. [Commercial in confidence].

15. Any Other Business

15.1 A meeting date had been set for the SUSS AGM, as well as a pre-meet with NUS.

15.2 Two students had been interviewed for the role of Student Trustee, with two vacancies currently on the Board. Both candidates were very good and the appointments panel are happy to appoint both.

End

Date of next meeting: 29th March 2022

Summary of Actions:

Action	For	To be completed by