**Student Council**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 1st December 2015**

**Student Councillors present:** Wesley Hudson (President), Lewis Arnold (Vice President Education), Hemaka Pathiranage (Vice President Student Activities), Claudia Calin (Non-UK Students’ Officer), Tim Brown (SU Society Rep – academic), Matt Sargeant (SU Society Rep – non-academic), Euan Morrison (SU Sports Rep – BUCS sports), Debbie Doyle (Mature Students’ Officer), Amy Wigley (RAG Officer), Fran Storey (Student Disability Officer), Michael Sherratt (Sustainability Officer), Mick Finnegan (Welfare Officer), Chris Margetts (Worcester Business School Rep)

**Also in attendance:** Savannah Ju (Chair), Philip Brookes (student), Adam Spindler (student reporter for The Voice), Sophie Williams (Chief Executive), Ruth Christie (Membership Services Manager, minute-taker), student observers, Molly Blackmore (SU photography assistant)

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| 1. **Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Molly was introduced as a new member of SU student staff, who would be taking photos during the meeting. Those in attendance were asked to indicate to Molly if they did not wish to have their photos taken.  |
| 1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Alex Dowson (SU Sports Rep – non-BUCS sports) |
| 1. **Applicants for Student Council positions**

Following the promotion of the remaining vacancies on Student Council, 11 students had submitted applications, although one had subsequently withdrawn. They were all invited to attend the meeting and to speak to Student Councillors for up to 2 minutes, explaining why they felt they would make effective members of Student Council. Student Councillors were also provided with extracts from students’ application forms, which addressed the following: “Please outline … why you would like to be a Student Councillor and how you would represent students’ interests.” Applicants were as follows:

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| Institute of Education  | Tabitha Bridgwater  |
| Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts | Seraphim Bryant  |
| Ella Handley |
| Nathaniel Nicholls |
| Adrienne Titley |
| Institute of Health and Society | Danny Gregory |
| Postgraduate | Philip Brookes |
| Verity Postlethwaite |
| Foundation Degree/HND | Sichao Du |
| City campus | Junjie Wu |

Adrienne sent apologies as she was unable to attend and Nathaniel did not attend. The other applicants were all invited to address Student Council, in turn. Once all applicants had done this, ballot papers were given to all Student Council members and they voted, through a secret ballot, to choose the students who will be co-opted on to Student Council. Applicants were told that the results of this ballot would be announced later in the week. |
| 1. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest |
| 1. **Approval of new SU clubs/societies**

As two committee members from the Deeper Life Campus Fellowship (DLCF) were in attendance, in response to an invitation to them to answer questions from Student Council, the Chair amended the order of the agenda items so that the students did not have to wait for too long. The Vice President Student Activities had circulated the amended constitution and the committee members provided further information on the proposed society. The students answered a number of questions from Student Council members and provided further examples of the kinds of activities they plan to be involved with. The Chair thanked the students for attending.The DLCF was then approved as a new society by Student Council, with 11 voting “yes”, one voting “no” and one abstaining.Marvel-DC SocietyThis society was approved unanimously, with 13 Student Councillors voting for approval.Midwifery SocietyThis society was approved unanimously, with 13 Student Councillors voting for approval.Paranormal SocietyMolly is a member of this group and was able to answer a number of questions posed by Student Council members. Following this discussion, Molly left the room and the society was approved unanimously, with 13 Student Councillors voting for approval. |
| 1. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 27th October 2015**

These were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. |
| 1. **Matters arising from the minutes/action points**

The action points had been previously circulated and the full-time officers reported on these.**Full-time officers:*** Report to the University’s executive team at the next meeting that there have been questions from students concerning the block grant and highlight the discussions which took place at Student Council.

*This has also been reported in the Vice President Education’s report to the University’s Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC)* **President:*** Inform the Academic Registrar of the outcome of the request for Student Council to approve the new Student Charter (see draft minutes for details.)

*The President forwarded Student Council’s proposals to the Academic Registrar, who has suggested a meeting to discuss this further. The President is awaiting an appointment from the Academic Registrar’s Executive Assistant.** Meet with the Accommodation Department and the International Office to raise concerns about international and exchange students’ problems in relation to the allocation of accommodation.

*The President has met with the International Office, who have agreed that this can be an issue. One solution which is being explored is to work with accommodation providers to offer a contract split into two semesters, so that international exchange students and home students taking part in exchanges could each secure accommodation for the appropriate semester. A “Homestay” (staying with a host family) option is also being considered. The University also has longer-term plans to double the amount of University accommodation available, which should alleviate such issues.***Action point: President to forward email from Clare Perkins (Exchange and Study Abroad Coordinator) to International Students’ Officer****Vice President Education:*** Meet with Matt (and Institute Reps?) to discuss ISES students’ concerns and questions in relation to Turnitin and SOLE.

*The Vice President Education reported that he has had assurances from Registry that these problems should not recur, but he encouraged students to make him aware of any similar issues as they arise.* **Vice President Student Activities:** * Invite the DLCF committee to attend the meeting of Student Council on Tuesday, 1st December so that Student Councillors can pose questions and discuss any concerns with the group.

*See above** Meet with RAG Officer to discuss the preparation of a shortlist of local charities for consideration at the next Student Council meeting.

*There is a shortlist of three charities to be the third RAG Charity (those already chosen are Delete Blood Cancer and the local fundraising branch of The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association). Students are currently being invited to vote for one of the following:** *Acorns Children’s Hospice*
* *Maggs Day Centre (which provides day-time support for homeless people in Worcester)*
* *Footsteps (a Worcestershire charity which supports bereaved children)*

*The coin-box has been used as part of SU on Tour and is available at other times on the SU Welcome Desk, enabling students to express their preference easily.** meet with SU Sports Rep for non-BUCS sports to discuss how support for these clubs can be improved and report back to the next Student Council meeting.

*As Alex was unable to come to this meeting, this item will be deferred to the next meeting of Student Council.** To discuss with Student Councillors representing sports and societies the establishment of a sub-committee, with staff support from the SU if required.

**Students’ Union:** * To advertise the remaining Student Council vacancies, inviting expressions of interest, with a deadline date of Monday 23rd November.

*See above. The deadline was brought forward to Friday 20th November.* |
| 1. **Update from Executive Committee**

The President reported that the Executive Committee met on Monday 23rd November and discussed their plans and priorities. All part-time officers have been allocated a member of SU staff as a mentor. |
| 1. **Update from the Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees met on Tuesday 17th November. A risk register was approved as was a matrix of delegated responsibilities, which clarifies the boundaries of responsibilities between trustees, Student Council, officers and the Chief Executive. A finance sub-committee was established and further sub-committees will be set up in the New Year, including and HR committee and a remunerations committee. Training for trustees and incorporation (becoming a company) was also on the agenda. The Vice President Education added that detailed officers’ reports are submitted to the Board of Trustees, as well as to Student Council.  |
| 1. **Officers’ reports**

The Welfare Officer apologised for his failure to submit a written report and gave a brief verbal report. He has met with the Pro Vice Chancellor Students and one of the University’s legal advisors, to raise his concerns about the University’s information sharing agreement, particularly in relation to the sharing of information with West Mercia Police. The Pro Vice Chancellor agreed that the current measures are draconian and assured the Welfare Officer that the agreement will be reviewed, will the aim of having a new information sharing agreement in place in time for the next academic year. The Pro Vice Chancellor also assured the Welfare Officer that the current agreement will be made publicly available on the University’s website (this has since been done). The Welfare Officer also reported that he is planning a festival entitled “Tales of Ordinary Madness”.The Deputy Chair suggested that, as so much time was devoted to hearing from the applicants for the Student Council vacancies, the officers would not discuss their reports in further detail, but welcomed any questions from Student Council members.The President added that he had taken part as a panel member at a Guild HE event on Wednesday 25th November, which had been interesting. |
| 1. **Motion to amend bye-law 5 (Elections)**

The Deputy Chair explained that this motion had been considered and approved at the Executive Committee meeting. The President explained the rationale, which is that any student who has received a final written warning as a result of a disciplinary process through either the University or the Students’ Union, should be barred from standing as a candidate for election to any SU position for the remainder of the academic year. Following a brief discussion, Student Council voted unanimously to approve this motion, which will now be referred to the Board of Trustees for their approval. **Action point: Membership Services Manager to record the approval of the motion and refer it to the Board of Trustees** |
| 1. **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

The President reported that the AGM is now due to take place at lunchtime on Thursday 14th January. The President of NUS, Megan Dunn, has accepted his invitation to attend the AGM. The President said that he welcomes suggestions from Student Council members as to how more students might be encouraged to attend and how it can be made into more of an “event” that students will want to come to.  |
| 1. **Pastoral services, care provided by the University of Worcester**

The SU non-academic societies rep explained that students have brought a number of concerns to his attention, which he has undertaken to discuss with Student Council.1. Personal Academic Tutor system

This is not consistent across courses. Different lecturers approach the framework in different ways and students find there is not necessarily the focus on personal and professional development which they would expect. A discussion followed, during which the following points were made:* As Institute Rep, attended a number of course management committees and it’s clear that the University is making efforts to improve consistency in terms of the support given by Personal Academic Tutors
* In the Institute of Science and the Environment, students have PDP (Personal Development Planning) forms and the lecturers sign these. Students must attend at least 2 personal tutorials each semester
* The Personal Academic Tutor system is to be one of the key topics at the StARs Forum, to be held on the evening of Wednesday 9th December
* In science subjects, attendance at Personal Academic Tutor meetings is mandatory (failure to attend results in a “fail” for that module)
* It can be a matter of luck – some students get on very well with their Personal Academic Tutors and have a great relationship with them, whereas others don’t
* It’s important for students to know that they can ask to be assigned to a different Personal Academic Tutor if they’re unhappy with the one they’ve been allocated
* There are currently issues within the Business School in terms of student engagement with Personal Academic Tutors – WBS seems to be trying to catch up with good practice in other institutes
* In some universities, such as Birmingham, there are Welfare Tutors as well as Academic Tutors. This is an attractive idea, but unlikely to be considered/resourced at Worcester
* The University is prioritising a review of the Personal Academic Tutor system in response to student feedback in the National Student Survey and the University’s Student Survey. The Vice Presidents both attend the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC), so will be able to keep Student Council updated on developments in this area.
1. Programme Advisory Service

At the start of the academic year, when students choose or change their programmes, there are only four Programme Advisors and it can be very difficult to book appointments with them as they are so over-stretched. Student Council members shared their own experiences and suggestions on this topic:* Programme Advisors will generally respond promptly to emails, even if they’re not available for a face-to-face meeting
* It’s often the fault of the students themselves, who have not done sufficient research to ensure they are making the right choices
* Students should allow time at the end of the semester to research modules
* In science subjects, lecturers promote their own courses. Final year students are also available to advise first-year and second-year students – this can be really helpful
* The role of the SU must be to ensure that students are well-informed
* The topic of the last StARs Forum was the new student-led timetabling approach – this is to be introduced in January 2016 and will mean that there is no cap on the number of places available on any module and this should relieve pressure on Programme Advisors. Once all students have chosen their modules, these will be timetabled according to demand. The Academic Registrar is confident that this new approach will provide students with a clash-free timetable, with lectures held in appropriate rooms to accommodate the numbers of students and the particular requirements of the lecture. Timetables will be finalised and released in July, so that students who have to make arrangements (such as childcare, transport or employment) have time to do so before the start of the new academic year. It will still be possible to change modules.
* Currently, many students who would like to take part in sporting activities on Wednesdays can’t because they have lectures scheduled (eg History)
* The Academic Registrar has suggested that, at the point at which they go to make their module choices, students will be asked whether they wish to take part in activities on Wednesdays and those who choose to do so should find their timetable accommodates this

**Action point: Vice President Student Activities to continue to seek assurances from the University’s Executive that any student wishing to take part in sports/societies activities on Wednesdays should be able to do so**1. Counselling services

Students have reported having to wait much longer than 2-3 weeks for an appointment and have been told by staff that funding for the service is being cut. There was a discussion which highlighted the following points:* The service is currently under-staffed – one member of staff is on maternity leave and the University is seeking to appoint a mental health nurse on a short-term (10 month) contract
* Student Services have acknowledged that students are having to wait longer for appointments than they used to, by they reported on 17th November that the wait was back down to 2 weeks
* Another sessional counsellor has now been appointed
* A key issue is that so many students are unaware of the existence of the counselling service – the SU should do more to promote its availability
* In response to a suggestion that Nightline volunteers could signpost to the service, it was explained that Nightline is a listening services and not an advice or referral service
* The Welfare Officer supports the [Campaign Against Living Miserably](https://www.thecalmzone.net/) which is a charity which supports young men with mental health issues
1. Careers service

Some students have reported that it’s more difficult to book appointments with the University’s Careers Service than it used to be, while others say that it’s easier. Appointments for the week are released on Monday mornings at 09:00am. For further information, see <http://www.worc.ac.uk/careers/careersappointments.htm>  |
| 1. **Any other business**

Temporary parking permission for sports clubsThe rep for BUCS sports pointed out that some clubs, such as the rugby club, have to travel to their “home” ground. They meet at the SU and travel together by car to the ground, but a number of the drivers have been ticketed for not having valid parking permits, even though they’re only on campus for a matter of minutes. This seems very unfair.It was confirmed that the company which manages parking on campus is very vigilant and students should be aware that they risk warnings and fines if they bring cars onto the site without paying to park, even for short periods of time. **Suggestion: Might it be possible to negotiate with the University for 15-minute parking permission passes?** It was pointed out that currently, all parking permits are the same colour, but perhaps this is something the University could accommodate.**Action point: Vice President Student Activities to discuss this further with the Executive Committee with a view to making representations to the University**Email responses from SUThe International Students’ Officer asked whether the SU has a policy regarding response times to emails from students (as academic staff are reported to have), as she has found on occasions that she’s had to wait for over a week for a reply from SU staff and/or officers. This is sometimes too late to make progress with plans.It was agreed that this will be discussed at the SU’s meeting of all staff and officers on Thursday 3rd December – it should be possible to agree that emails should be responded to within 48 hours or two working days.Budget for part-time officers campaignsIn response to a question, it was reported that the SU aims to have budgets for all Executive Officers next year, but the SU is not currently in a position to put these in place. Where officers have plans with cost implications, these should be discussed at the Executive Committee meeting and they will be supported wherever possible. Change of role title for rep for non-academic societiesThe rep asked if Student Council would support a change of role title to rep for “general interest societies”. Student Council approved this suggestion unanimously.Facebook groupThe Chair asked Student Council members if they would find a Facebook group helpful. It was agreed that the Chair will set one up.**Action point: Chair to set up closed Facebook group for Student Council members** |
| **Date of next meeting**The next meeting of Student Council will be held on Thursday 4th February 2016 at 17:15 in EEG027 |

**Updates following the meeting**

1. New Student Council members

The Chair and the Deputy Chair met on Thursday 3rd December to count the votes cast by Student Council members. As a result, the following students are to be co-opted on to Student Council:

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| 1. Institute of Education Rep
 | Tabitha Bridgwater |
| 1. Institute of Health and Society Rep
 | Danny Gregory |
| 1. Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts Rep
 | Seraphim Bryant |
| 1. Postgraduate Rep
 | Verity Postlethwaite |
| 1. City campus Rep
 | Junjie Wu |
| 1. Rep for foundation degree/HND students
 | Sichao Du |

2. Email response times from SU staff and officers

At the meeting of all SU staff and officers held on 3rd December 2015, it was agreed that students should expect a response to emails sent to SU staff and officers within 48 hours or two working days.