**Student Council**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4th February 2016**

**Student Councillors present:** Wesley Hudson, Lewis Arnold (Chair), Hemaka Pathiranage, Claudia Calin, Tim Brown, Matt Sargeant, Euan Morrison, Debbie Doyle, Amy Wigley, Fran Story, Michael Sherratt, Mick Finnegan, Tabitha Bridgwater, Danny Gregory, Very Postlethwaite, Junjie Wu, Sichao Du, Jo Hunter (once co-opted – see below)

**Also in attendance:** Chantal Vinyard, Jo Hunter, Sophie Williams (Chief Executive), Ruth Christie (Membership Services Manager, minute-taker)

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| 1. **Welcome and introductions**   Lewis welcomed everyone, particularly new Student Councillors, to the meeting and explained that he would be chairing, as Savannah has not yet returned from France. He invited everyone to introduce themselves. |
| 1. **Apologies**   Apologies for absence were received from Chris Margetts and Beverley Clarke. The International Students’ Officer and the RAG Officer had apologised for the fact that they would both be arriving late, due to having evening lectures. |
| 1. **Declarations of interest**   There were none |
| 1. **Application for the role of Women’s Officer**   An application had been received from Jo Hunter, who is very interested in taking up the role of Women’s Officer for the remainder of the academic year. Her application had been circulated to Student Councillors in advance of the meeting and Jo was invited to address Student Council on her reasons for wanting the role.  Jo was then invited to leave the room and Student Councillors were then asked to vote on whether to co-opt Jo to the position of Women’s Officer. The votes were as follows (at the time of the vote, there were 14 members present):  Yes: 14  No: 0  Abstain: 0  Jo was invited back and welcomed to Student Council as Women’s Officer |
| 1. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 1st December 2015**   These were approved as an accurate record of the meeting |
| 1. **Matters arising from the minutes/action points** 2. President to forward email from Clare Perkins (Exchange and Study Abroad Coordinator) to International Students’ Officer: the President confirmed that he has met with the International Students’ Officer to discuss this 3. Membership Services Manager to record the approval of the motion to amend bye-law 5 (Elections) and refer it to the Board of Trustees: this has been done 4. 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: the full-time officers continue to raise this with the University’s Executive 5. Chair to set up closed Facebook group for Student Council members: this has been done and provides another platform for Student Councillors to receive messages, reminders, agendas etc |
| 1. **Update from Executive Committee**   The President reported that the Executive Committee met yesterday and will continue to meet fortnightly. Ideas for RAG Week were discussed and Student Councillors are welcome to submit further ideas via Facebook. A number of part-time officers are doing some brilliant stuff, including the Welfare Officer’s “Time to Talk” event and the Student Disability Officer’s work with the Disability and Dyslexia Service. The President said there was recognition that communications between officers and SU staff need to be improved, so that staff can be aware of and help to support officers’ plans and activities.  The Chair explained, for the benefit of new Student Councillors, that Executive Committee is made up of all of the full-time and part-time elected officers.  The Mature Students’ Officer suggested that a joint meeting of the Executive Committee and SU staff might help to improve collaborative working, but it was pointed out that all part-time officers have staff mentors, who should be able to ensure that information is shared about events and activities being planned. It was also noted that one of the key functions of the Executive Committee meetings is for all officers to discuss their plans and keep one another informed.  All officers were also alerted to the fact that they should come to the SU with any press releases connected with their events as the SU need to go through the University’s Press Office before these reports can be published. |
| 1. **Update from the Board of Trustees**   The Chair of Trustees reported that the Board had met on Tuesday 2nd February. The review of the constitution is to be delayed as the Union is going through a period of significant change and the constitution will need to reflect this. The amendments to Bye-Law 5 were approved. New student trustees will need to be recruited soon. Matt Sargeant has been approved as a new student trustee by the Board, but his appointment needs to be approved by Student Council.  For the benefit of those not familiar with the Board of Trustees, Student Councillors were told that the SU is a charity. The Charities Act 2006 brought in a requirement that students’ unions needed to register with the Charity Commission and Worcester Students’ Union was registered in 2011. Charities need trustees to take responsibility for governance, finances, policies and procedures. We have a Board of Trustees made up of three officer trustees (the full-time officers), up to four student trustees (who are all current students) and up to three external trustees (who are appointed to bring additional expertise and experience to the Board). The Board of trustees meets six times during the year.  The Chair of Trustees explained that there is a recruitment and selection process for student trustees. Matt was interviewed and attended this week’s Board meeting, where he made useful contributions and asked plenty of questions.  Matt was then asked to leave the room and Student Councillors were asked to approve his appointment as a student trustee. The votes were as follows (at the time of the vote, there were 15 members present):  Yes: 15  No: 0  Abstain: 0  Matt Sargeant’s appointment as a student trustee was therefore approved by Student Council. |
| 1. **Officers’ reports**   These had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Chair asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none. |
| 1. **LGBT Officer**   The President explained that the Executive Committee had discussed yesterday the fact that the LGBT Officer, Beverley Clarke, has failed to attend any Student Council meetings or any Executive Committee meetings, has never submitted a report to Student Council and has not responded to requests for her to get in touch from the President and her SU staff mentor. The Executive Committee has therefore proposed a vote of no confidence in the LGBT Officer.  Student Councillors discussed the situation in some detail. There was a lot of sympathy with Beverley as she is a student nurse and has a very demanding course with a lot of placement requirements. Others commented that she has been a very effective StAR, dealing with a number of situations very well. She has also been very helpful to individual students in relation to their studies and research. There was general agreement that students should not stand for part-time officer roles if they don’t have the capacity to commit to the requirements of the position.  The Chair then asked Student Council to vote to remove Beverley Clarke from the position of LGBT Officer. The votes were as follows (at the time of the vote, there were 17 members present):  Yes: 11  No: 3  Abstain: 3  The vote of no confidence was therefore passed. Beverley will be informed of Student Council’s decision and will be invited to come in and talk to an officer or staff member about the situation.  The part-time officers were commended on their work. |
| 1. **Elections**   The President explained that nominations open on Monday 15th February for students wishing to stand for the full-time officer positions (President, Vice President Education and Vice President Student Activities) as well as the NUS Conference delegate positions. He will not be taking up his NUS Conference delegate role as the Conference takes place from 19th – 21st April in Brighton and this clashes with Varsity week and he feels he needs to be present for the Varsity events. This means that there are three Conference delegate places available, one of which must be taken by a student who self-identifies as a woman.  The Mature Students’ Officer asked why part-time officers have been told that they must suspend all their activities during the period when nominations are open, in order to avoid any possibility of them taking advantage of their role in advance of standing for a full-time officer position. She suggested that this might have a detrimental impact on students represented by part-time officers and also queried why the same rule did not apply to incumbent full-time officers who might decide to stand for re-election.  It was explained that this instruction is not an attack on or criticism of the part-time officers, but an attempt to make the elections as fair as possible and provide a level playing field which does not give any potential candidate an unfair advantage over any others. It was also there to protect part-time officers from being accused of using their position for unfair advantage. Full-time officers are paid and under an employment contract, so they are required to continue to undertake their duties, although any standing for re-election will be required to take week commencing 29th February as annual leave.  Student Councillors discussed this in some detail, giving consideration for the need for fairness, the requirements of the part-time officers’ roles and the rules relating to incumbent full-time officers. One part-time officer said that it’s clear that the rule has been introduced in order to protect part-time officers from criticism, but on the other hand part-time officers don’t want to let down the students they represent.  After further discussion, the Chair invited Student Council to vote on a proposal to reduce the time required for current part-time officers to suspend their activities from three weeks (ie from Monday 15th February, when nominations open) to one week (ie week commencing Monday 29th February, when candidates will be campaigning and voting takes place).  The votes were as follows (at the time of the vote, there were 18 members present):  Yes: 11  No: 0  Abstain: 7  Current part-time officers will therefore be permitted to continue to carry out the activities related to their role up until the deadline for nominations closing, which is midday on Friday 26th February. Any current part-time officers who become candidates for election must suspend the activities relating to their role until the close of voting at 16:00 on Friday 4th March. |
| 1. **Prevent duty**   The President explained that universities have a duty, under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, to have ‘due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.’ This is generally known as the [Prevent duty](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/prevent/). Requirements and guidance were produced last year for universities and other institutions on how they should ensure that they are taking adequate measures to prevent students from being drawn into terrorism. The NUS opposes the imposition of the Prevent duty, as although it is designed to counter all types of extremism, it is perceived by some as being specifically anti-Muslim.  The University of Worcester will be drawing up Codes of Practice around Freedom of Speech and External Speakers and it is a requirement that they engage with the Union and as many students as possible. The President suggested that the most appropriate people to take part in these discussions are Student Council members and society committee members, as the main concern will be external speakers. The strategy will need to enable background checks to be carried out on any external speakers who might be invited to address students, whether by academic staff or in extra-curricular circumstances (such as meetings arranged by societies).  After further discussion about freedom of speech, the potential for public disorder if a particularly popular speaker was to be invited and the risks of alienating students, the Chair explained that the University has a legal obligation to draw up a strategy – the question for Student Council is whether students should have some input in drawing up the policy. Student Council was therefore asked to decide whether the SU should facilitate student engagement with the University on this issue. The votes were as follows:  Yes: 17  No: 0  Abstain: 1  The President and Vice Presidents will inform the University that Student Council supports the involvement of students in drawing up the Prevent strategy and code of conduct and will invite Student Council members and society committee members to discussions. |
| 1. **Approval of third RAG charity**   The RAG Officer explained that RAG is raising funds for three charities: [Delete Blood Cancer](http://www.deletebloodcancer.org.uk/en) and the [Worcester Fundraising Group for Guide Dogs](https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/aboutus/local-to-you/fundraising-groups/worcester-fundraising-group#.VsR5_kDz7OA) were chosen earlier in the year and students were asked to choose the third from the following: [Acorns Children’s Hospice](https://www.acorns.org.uk/), [Footsteps](http://talktofootsteps.co.uk/) (a Worcester-based charity which supports bereaved families) and the [Maggs Day Centre](http://www.maggsdaycentre.co.uk/) (a centre for homeless people in Worcester). The coin drop-box was taken on SU on Tour and the three options were put to students. The most popular choice was Maggs Day Centre.  The Chair invited Student Councillors to approve Maggs Day Centre as the third RAG charity for the current year. The votes were as follows:  Yes: 17  No: 0  Abstain: 1 |
| 1. **Any other business**   Partner Colleges  The Student Disability Officer reported that there has been lots of feedback from students in partner colleges, who feel left out. She suggested that consideration might be given to introducing a new officer role, with responsibility for representing the interests of students not based at Worcester. An alternative approach might be to have representatives for geographical clusters.  It was clear that some Student Councillors did not know what “partner colleges” are, so this was explained: around 2,000 student registered for study on a University of Worcester course (and therefore members of Worcester Students’ Union) undertake their courses at a range of colleges and institutions across the country. The University’s website provides a [full list](http://www.worcester.ac.uk/discover/about-partner-institutions.html) of these. The President, Vice President Education and Mature Students’ Officer visited students at [The Learning Institute](http://www.learninginstitute.co.uk/) in Cornwall last month and this was well received. Some students are at colleges which have their own students’ union (the President has met with the President of Warwickshire College SU, for instance) but others rely on Worcester SU for services and support.  The Mature Students’ Officer pointed out that the majority of students in partner colleges are mature and the Student Disability Officer explained that disabled students often have to rely on support from external agencies, which may not be of a comparable standard to the “in-house” support provided at Worcester.  It was generally agreed that it would be good to review how the SU supports students in partner colleges, but the first step needs to be to find out what those students want from us.  **Action: The Vice President Education and the Mature Students’ Officer will consult with students in partner colleges and ask for feedback on how the SU can help support them.** |