Student Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14th October from 17:15 – 19:15 in EE1107

1. **Present**

Student Councillors: Wes Hudson (President), Tom Clarke (Vice President Education), Helen Manners (Mature Students’ Officer), Savannah Ju (Non-UK Students’ Officer), Jack Buczynski (RAG Officer), Vanessa Gordon (Sustainability Officer), Georgie Bull (Welfare Officer), Chantal Vinyard (Women’s Officer), Joe Hayes (Societies), Tina Wootton-Porter (Societies), Joshua Ware (Sports), Claudia Calin (non-UK students), Thomas Beale (RAG), Allie Gentle (RAG), Sarah Meyrick (Institute of Health and Society), Nicki Le Page (Institute of Science and the Environment), Mihaela Getzova (Worcester Business School), Ben Norris (mature students)

Also in attendance: Ellen Joyce (Chair); Paul Johnston (Chief Executive); Ruth Christie (Membership Services Manager); Connor Allen, Jeremy Hanley-Keeley, Morgan Koronis, Victoria Maybury, Zac Pritchard

Apologies: Abi Clarke (Vice President Student Activities), Val Turner, Munifa Rauf (BAME)

Absent: Jane Abbott, Rebecca Jones, Luke Hysted

1. **Approval of new Student Councillors**

Ellen introduced herself as Chair of Student Council and welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained that 7 more students have applied to be Student Councillors and it is for Student Council to decide whether to approve their applications. Jane Abbott and Rebecca Jones have both applied to represent students with an interest in sustainability (for which there are two places) and Luke Hysted has applied to represent students living in off-site University-managed accommodation. These students were not present. The following students were invited to explain to Student Council why they wanted to join:

* Connor Allen to represent students with disability
* Jeremy Hanley-Keeley to represent students who commute to University
* Morgan Koronis to represent students living in halls of residence on St Johns campus
* Victoria Maybury to represent students living in private rented accommodation

When the students had spoken, they were all asked to leave the room while a vote was taken. In every case, the applicants were approved by all 18 voting Student Councillors. The students were called back into the room and told that they had been approved as Student Councillors and were therefore entitled to vote on further matters during the meeting.

1. **New clubs and societies**

**Pole Fitness Society**

The Chair explained that two members of the proposed Poll Fitness society have been invited to address Student Council, following the referral of the constitution at the previous meeting, so the agenda order has been changed to deal with clubs and societies first. She welcomed the chair, Belynda (Be) Peters and the treasurer, Rachel Miles. Earlier in the day, the President met with the committee members to discuss the changes which needed to be made to the constitution in order for it to be in a state which Student Council could consider. The amended constitution was discussed by Councillors and Be and Rachel answered a number of questions, as follows:

Paul confirmed that, whilst the instructor may sit on the committee, she is not entitled to vote. The club plans to hold their sessions at a new studio which is due to be opened by the end of October. There would be spaces for 20-25 students per class, with 4-5 students per instructor. Only members of the society would be eligible the student-only classes. Membership fees are to be decided and, dependent on the numbers joining, there might be a “pay as you go” fee as well. Be is designing promotional materials (she is a graphic design student), using the phoenix symbol rather than a human form. Paul explained that the SU’s preferred option in terms of payment is that money should be paid weekly to the instructor (as opposed to paying in advance for a whole semester’s classes) – this would reduce risks.

The Chair thanked Be and Rachel for coming and asked them to leave the room whilst a vote was taken. Student Councillors unanimously approved the Pole Fitness Society (22 Student Councillors voted).

**Gaming Society**

The constitution was considered and the Gaming Society was unanimously approved.

**Harry Potter Society**

The Chair noted that this was a poorly-written, unfinished constitution which Student Council would find difficult to approve in its current state. There were a number of questions from Councillors including:

* How could the aims and objectives be fulfilled?
* What are the implications of affiliating?
* Does the constitution match that of Harry Potter societies at other students’ unions?

Student Council agreed to refer the constitution back to the committee and invite them to re-submit a revised, complete constitution to the next meeting.

**Student Parents and Carers Society**

Chantal and Tina declared an interest and were asked to abstain from voting. The committee will be asked to amend the reference to the Vice President to read “Vice President Student Activities”. With 20 Student Councillors voting to approve the Society and two abstentions, the Student Parents and Carers Society was approved.

Sarah had to leave the meeting early, leaving a total of 21 Student Councillors present.

1. **Motion to mandate Worcester Students’ Union to ask the University to update their Harassment Policy**

Chantal proposed this policy. As part of her research in connection with developing a “zero tolerance” charter and policy, the Women’s Officer realised that the University’s current harassment policy is very narrow. There is no reference to online harassment, for instance. Wes seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by 21 Councillors.

1. **RAG Charities**

Jack explained that three charities have already been chosen to receive funds raised through RAG events – [St Richard’s Hospice](http://www.strichards.org.uk/), [Headway Worcestershire](headway%20worcester%20trust) and [Worcestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre](http://www.wrsasc.org.uk/). At the first RAG committee meeting, it was proposed that the fourth charity should be [Worcester Snoezelen](http://www.worcestersnoezelen.org.uk/). This is another local charity, based at the St Johns campus and it came second in the “token drop” exercise which took place during Freshers’ Week. Jack pointed out that all four charities are local and it is hoped that the SU can forge links with all of them in terms of volunteering opportunities as well as fundraising.

Student Council unanimously agreed that Worcester Snoezelen should be RAG’s fourth chosen charity.

1. **Minutes of the previous Student Council held on Tuesday 23rd September**

It was pointed out that there was a reference to 2015 which should read 2014. Apart from this, it was agreed by those who attended that the minutes were an accurate record and the minutes were approved.

1. **New part-time officers**

The Chair invited Georgie and Vanessa, newly-elected part-time officers, to address Student Council about their priorities in their new roles.

Welfare Officer, Georgie Bull, said that she wants to challenge perceptions of mental health issues. She is keen to see the establishment of the Nightline service and wants to help make it easier for students to get the support they need. When campaigning in the by-election, Georgie found that many first-year students felt quite overwhelmed.

Sustainability Officer, Vanessa Gordon, explained that she hopes to remove the stigma around going “green” and put the fun back into it. She’s keen to look at ways of supporting NUS’s “black-out” campaign and is investigating ways of raising awareness, such as a concert in the dark, encouraging students to get involved with the Student Switch Off campaign and use Facebook to demonstrate student engagement with energy-saving. Joe pointed out that having a blanket “switch off” would affect students trying to study. Connor commented that it’s not possible to switch off kitchen lights in some halls of residence.

1. **By-elections**

The Chair explained that there had been no candidates for the part-time Diversity Officer position in the recent by-election, so this role remains unfilled. Student Council needs to decide whether another by-election should take place and if so, when this will be held.

There was considerable discussion about whether it was appropriate to try again to attract candidates for the Diversity Officer position. It was felt that the “Diversity” role was too broad and relied on, for instance, a student with a disability representing not only the interests of students with a disability but also BAME and LGBT students. Students would not agree that this provides the kind of representation they need as members of a disadvantaged group. A number of Student Councillors including Chantal, Georgie, Victoria and Connor putting forward the argument that Worcester Students’ Union, in line with the NUS liberation campaigns, should have part-time officer positions for each of the campaigns, ie women, LGBT, students with a disability and BAME (black and minority ethnic). There is already a Women’s Officer, so the other three groups should also have their own representation, it was argued.

Questions were raised about eligibility to stand for election and to vote, if these new roles are to be adopted. It was explained that students would be asked to self-declare themselves to be LGBT, to have a disability and/or to be from a black and minority ethnic background, in order to stand as a candidate and to vote online. It is unlikely that students will declare themselves to identify with any of these groups if they do not.

After further discussion, it was agreed that Student Council should be asked to approve a proposal to hold a by-election as soon as practicable for three new part-time officer roles, in place of the Diversity Officer position:

* Student Disability Officer
* Minority Ethnic Officer
* LGBT Officer

Zac suggested that the two NUS Conference delegate roles should be elected at the same time, giving those elected time to familiarise themselves with what’s expected of delegates to Conference and to give them the opportunity to stand for national roles themselves. Chantal suggested that doing this would also mean that all candidates in the main elections in March would have the same budget (currently, candidates also standing as a delegate for NUS Conference have an additional small budget to spend on their campaigns).

Paul alerted Student Council to the policy change adopted by NUS at their 2014 Conference which means that every students’ union delegation must be made up of 50% women delegates, rounded down. Worcester Students’ Union has a delegate entitlement of three, with the President (who this year is male) taking one of these places automatically. That means that one of the other two delegates must be a woman. He assured Student Council that, provided there is at least one female candidate, the online voting system will ensure that there is a woman delegate, elected fairly.

The Chair therefore put it to Council that there should be a by-election for the three new part-time officers and two delegates to NUS National Conference, one of whom must be a woman, as soon as possible. Tina proposed this decision, Wes seconded it and Student Council agreed the proposal unanimously, with 21 votes in favour.

1. **AGM**

The Chair reminded Student Council that the Annual General Meeting is to be held on Tuesday 4th November.

1. **Nightline**

This is covered in the President’s report.

1. **Officers’ reports**

The Chair thanked all of the officers for their reports. Unfortunately, there was no time to go through these in detail but they are available for all Student Councillors to read. She asked if any of the officers had any particular points they wished to make. Savannah, Non-UK Students’ Officer, said that she hopes to arrange a Christmas event early in December for international students and she asked if the SU might be willing to help with funding this. The Chair suggested that Savannah should talk through her plans with the President to discuss how the SU might be able to help.

1. **Date of the next meeting**

The Chair said that details of the next meeting will be confirmed as soon as possible. She reminded those present that there are still vacancies for a number of Student Councillors.