**Student Council**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28th October 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), Alex Dowson (SU Sports Rep – non-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)

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **Welcome and introductions**

The Chair introduced herself and asked all Student Councillors to introduce themselves, giving their name and role. |
| 1. **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence. |
| 1. **Declarations of interest**

The Chair invited the President to explain this phrase. He first set out the expectation that all members of Student Council should listen to what others have to say without interrupting them and indicate to the Chair when they wish to say something, waiting until invited by the Chair to speak. He then said that a Deputy Chair needs to be elected, to deputise for the Chair in the event of her absence. Lewis volunteered to take on this role and was duly elected to be Deputy Chair. The President explained that, if any member of Student Council has a personal interest (individually, or by association) in any of the items on the agenda, he/she should declare this. Both Hemaka and Tim declared their interest in the application from Women’s Cricket.  |
| 1. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on Friday 25th September 2015**

These were agreed to be a true record of the meeting and the minutes were approved. |
| 1. **Matters arising from the minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes. |
| 1. **Update from Executive Committee**

The President reported that the new Executive Committee had met for the first time yesterday, 27th October 2015. They discussed their manifestos and started to explore their plans for their year in office. The Executive Committee will be meeting fortnightly from now on. |
| 1. **Update from the Board of Trustees**

Student Council was told that, as a registered charity, Worcester Students’ Union is governed by a Board of Trustees, who have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the organisation is financially sound and is run efficiently, effectively and democratically. The Board of Trustees is made up of the three full-time officers (officer trustees), four students (student trustees) and three external trustees. The Chief Executive reports to the Board of Trustees, which met on Tuesday 29th September 2015. They welcomed a new external trustee, Jill Wilson, who has extensive experience of working for students’ unions and universities and has recently retired as Director of Student Services at Aston University. At the meeting discussed priorities for the year ahead and agreed the terms of reference for the Board. They have responsibility for overseeing the management accounts, recruitment of staff and producing the charity’s annual report and receive updates from the Executive Committee, Student Council and the Chief Executive. The Board of Trustees will meet at least five times during the year and the schedule of meetings and the format of the agenda have been agreed.There is currently a vacancy for a student trustee, which is due to be advertised in early November.  |
| 1. **Officers’ reports**

These were distributed to Student Councillors in advance of the meeting, so questions and comments were invited. PresidentStudents were not happy with the timing of Housing Week in 2015 as it was held during assessment week. The President reported that Housing Week is to be held during week commencing Monday 25th January in 2016 (Worcester Week).Vice President EducationThere were no questions or comments.Vice President Student ActivitiesThe VP Student Activities said he was pleased to see so many new sports clubs and societies being established and he alerted Student Council to the fact that they would be asked to consider further applications for approval in future meetings. Non-UK Students’ OfficerThe non-UK Students’ Officer asked for help from the SU to promote the forthcoming Language Cafés. She also asked any Student Councillors interested in the possibility of organising a TEDx event in Worcester next year to let her know. In response to a question, Claudia explained that a number of universities have a “World Society”, which aims to represent the interests of all international students. At Worcester, students are being encouraged to establish “national” societies, bringing together students from particular areas of the worldNew part-time officersThe Chair asked whether any of the newly-elected part-time officers had anything they wanted to talk about to Student Council.The Welfare Officer said that he plans to start talking to students next week about mental health issues, particularly engaging with male students, as men are far less likely to seek help and support than women.  |
| 1. **Student Charter**

The President explained that the University is seeking Student Council’s approval of the revised Student Charter. This was discussed in some detail and the Chair then asked Student Councillors to vote on whether to approve the amended Student Charter with further amendments as follows:**Assessment and Feedback**Student Council proposes the following amendment in the third paragraph:“Staff will provide feedback within twenty working days or communicate to students reasons for delay within those twenty working days.”**Support for students**Student Council proposes the following amendment in the second paragraph:“In addition the Students’ Union will provide independent support for students who encounter academic or welfare problems. They will also provide a range of clubs, societies and volunteering opportunities to enhance students’ personal and professional development.”Student Council voted unanimously to approve the revised Student Charter including the changes above, with all 14 Student Councillors voting “yes”. **Action: President to inform the Academic Registrar of this outcome.****Action: Vice President Education to arrange to meet Matt to discuss ISES students’ concerns and questions in relation to Turnitin and SOLE.** |
| 1. **Approval of new SU clubs and societies**

The Vice President Student Activities explained that he has reviewed these submissions with the Sports Coordinator and the Volunteering and Societies Coordinator and they agree that the constitutions, budgets and contact details of these student groups are satisfactory, so Student Council is asked to approve them.CosplayA number of Student Councillors were not familiar with this term, which is not defined in the society’s constitution. The Vice President Student Activities and the Chair gave an explanation *(the Urban Dictionary defines Cosplay as: Literally "Costume Play." Dressing up and pretending to be a fictional character (usually a sci-fi, comic book, or anime character).* Student Council voted to approve Cosplay as a new SU society, with all 14 Student Councillors voting “yes”. Deeper Life Campus Fellowship (DLCF)In addition to the constitution, budget sheet and contact details which the group had submitted, the Vice President Student Activities had been provided with further information which he distributed to Student Council. A number of questions and concerned were raised, particularly in relation to the content of this document, with some Student Councillors not convinced that there was justification to approve a third Christian society. Student Council were not prepared to approve DLCF at this point, as they had questions for the applicants. Members of DLCF’s committee will therefore be invited to the next meeting of Student Council to answer questions and address concerns.**Action: Vice President Student Activities to 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.** English Literary Studies SocietyThis society was unanimously approved, with 14 Student Councillors voting “yes”.Women’s CricketThis society was approved, with 12 Student Councillors voting “yes” and two (who had declared an interest) abstaining. |
| 1. **RAG Charities**

The President explained that there had been discussions during the summer about how many RAG charities there should be. It was decided by the Executive Committee that three charities should be chosen – one national charity and two local charities. [Delete Blood Cancer UK](http://www.deletebloodcancer.org.uk/en) was chosen, championed by the Vice President Education who has recently donated stem cells, having been found to be a match for a stranger. The Worcester fundraising branch of [Guide Dogs for the Blind](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/) was recommended to be the second charity. The newly-elected RAG Officer has been asked to prepare a short-list of local charities for Student Council to consider as the third RAG charity, which will be voted on at the next meeting.The Chair asked Student Council to approve the first two charities as recipients of funds raised by RAG. Delete Blood Cancer UK was approved, with 13 Student Councillors voting “yes” and one (who had declared an interest) abstaining. Guide Dogs for the Blind was unanimously approved, with 14 Student Councillors voting “yes”.**Action: RAG Officer, with support from Vice President Student Activities, to prepare a shortlist of local charities for consideration at the next Student Council meeting.**  |
| 1. **Student Council vacancies**

11 vacancies for Student Council positions remain and there was a discussion about how these might be filled. It was agreed that the SU will advertise the vacant positions and ask for expressions of interest from students, with a deadline of a week prior to the next Student Council meeting. Applicants will be invited to address Student Council, explaining why they feel they would make effective Student Councillors for the relevant positions and Student Council will be invited to vote to approve co-option for suitable candidates.**Action: SU to advertise the remaining vacancies, with a deadline date of Monday 23rd November.** |
| 1. **Any other business**

Academic/non-academic societiesMatt reported that he has asked for clarification from the Volunteering and Societies Co-ordinator as to which societies are defined as “academic” and which are “non-academic”. He and Tim will distribute the list in advance of the next meeting.Accommodation issuesInternational students and exchange programme students have reported problems in relation to the allocation of accommodation. There has been a lack of information and insufficient communication from the Accommodation Department, with some students having had to fly to the UK without knowing where they are to be living.**Action: President to discuss these issues with the Accommodation Department and the International Office and report back to Student Council.**Support for non-BUCs sports clubsAlex explained that he would like to explore ways to help non-BUCS sports to develop, with a view to working towards higher-level competition including BUCS entry in some cases. Women’s volleyball, tennis, futsal and handball are examples of the teams which could benefit from better support. The handball club, for instance, are keen to have external coaches and transport costs are a barrier for most of the clubs. Alex would also like help from the SU to highlight and promote the important fixtures in the year for those clubs not competing in BUCS. The President suggested that Alex should meet with the Vice President Student Activities to discuss these ideas.**Action: Vice President Student Activities to 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.**Messages to students from RegistryThe Student Disability Officer reported that students from a number of courses have received emails from Registry telling them there has been a failure to submit 2nd semester modules. It appears that these were sent in error, but students have been confused and distressed by these.**Action: Vice President Education to follow up these complaints with Registry and report back to Student Council.**Early morning fire alarm tests in halls of residenceThe Welfare Officer reported that 5:30am fire alarm tests and particularly problematic for students on placements who need their sleep. The Vice President Education said that the full-time officers could ask whether these tests could be arranged later in the morning, but it was likely that there is a good reason for the timing as it would be when the majority of students are in their rooms, so evacuation procedures would be realistic and include the highest possible number of people. Additional meetingsMatt suggested that it was unrealistic to hope that all of the issues which Student Councillors may want addressed could be dealt with in the remaining 5 meetings of Student Council. After some discussion, it was proposed that a working group or sub-committee, including the four Student Councillors representing sports clubs and societies, could be established, which would meet between Student Council meetings and report back to Student Council. The SU would support this and any other sub-committees which Student Councillors choose to set up.The Chair invited Student Councillors to vote on a verbal motion to pilot the establishment of a sub-committee. This motion was approved, with 9 Student Councillors voting “Yes” and 5 abstaining.**Action: Student Councillors representing sports and societies to discuss the setting up of a sub-committee and to let the SU know if they want support with this.**Block grantMatt said that a number of staff and students have commented that, in comparison with other students’ unions, Worcester Students’ Union receives a disproportionately small block grant from the University and he asked Executive Officers if they were aware of this and whether they plan to lobby for an increase in the block grant allocation. The President explained that the full-time officers are very aware of this and that, in meetings with the University’s Executive and the Board of Governors, they lobby for an increased level of support from the University. The Vice President Education added that the officers all agree that Worcester Students’ Union should campaign for an increase in the block grant and the Executive Officers will be working hard to demonstrate the impact of the organisation and its work. The SU submits a bid annually to the University and the next submission will be due in May/June next year. **Action: Full-time officers to raise with the University Executive team the fact that Student Council has discuss the block grant allocation, in response to students’ questions and comments.**Change of title The non-UK Students’ Officer asked if Student Council would consider a verbal motion to change the title of the role to International Students’ Officer, as this would be easier for students to understand and would be a more positive title. The Chair invited Student Councillors to vote and the change was approved, with 13 voting “yes” and one abstaining. |