Student Council Minutes

# Monday 20th May, 14:00-16:30, EE2033

**Agenda**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Welcome and introductions |
|  | Apologies |
|  | Declarations of interest |
|  | Minutes of previous meeting |
|  | Matters arising |
| Discussion Items | |
|  | WSU Democratic Governance Proposal |
| Approval Items | |
| 7. | Motions   * 2018-19\_010 Standardisation of Blackboard * 2018-19\_011 SU Against Fit to Sit * 2018-19\_012 Deadlines and Multiple Assessments |
| 8. | Approval of Clubs and Societies   * Women’s Futsal * Biomedical Society |
| Reporting Items | |
| 9. | Officers’ reports – questions/comments |
| Any other Business | |
| 10. | Any other business |

**Attendance**

**Councillors present:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Chair | Katie Watts | KW |
| President | Lucy Conn | LC |
| Vice President Education | Euan Morrison | EM |
| Postgraduate Representative | Alex Gardener | AG |
| Sports and Exercise Science Representative (and Newly Elect President 2019-20) | Harry Lonsdale | HL |
| Education Representative | Kelly Chamberlain | KC |
| LGBTQ+ Officer | James Gould | JG |

**Also in attendance:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Vice President Education 2019-20 Elect | Meg Price | MP |
| Vice President Student Activities 2019-20 Elect | Mike Harris | MH |
| Students’ Union Chief Executive | Sophie Williams | SW |
| Student Engagement Manager | Tim Hewes-Belton | THB |
| Student Voice Assistant (minute-taking) | Jodie Stilgoe | JS |

**Apologies Received:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Vice President Student Activities | Harrison Jarrett | HJ |
| Sustainability Officer | Shannon Bolton | SB |
| SU Sports Representative (non-BUCS Sports) | Olivia Clifford | OC |

**Not Present:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| SU Sports Rep (BUCS Sports) | Chloe-May Barton | CMB |
| Arts Rep | Emmy Khan | EK |
| Nursing and Midwifery Rep | Valerie Deeley | VD |
| University of Worcester Business School Rep | Gianina Ratiu | GR |
| Women’s Officer | Alia Moorhouse | AM |
| Student Disability Officer | Kaya Tveito-Duncan | KTD |
| SU Society Representative (general interest) | Ellie Siviter | ES |
| SU Society Representative (academic) | Georgie Cooper | GC |
| International Students’ Officer | Yanzhe Li | YL |

**Minutes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. | **Welcome** |
|  | KW welcomed everyone to the last Student Council of the 2018-19 academic year. |
| 2. | **Apologies** |
|  | Apologies were received from Harrison Jarrett (HJ) Vice President Student Activities, Shannon Bolton (SB) Sustainability Officer, and Olivia Clifford (OC) SU Sports Representative (non-BUCS Sports) |
| 3. | **Declarations of interest** |
|  | KW asked those present if there were any declarations of interest for any agenda items. JG, HL, and EM noted that all three motions were from Education Council, of which they are all members. JG, HL and EM are neither policy proposers nor policy seconders for any motions and so all are able to vote. |
| 4. | **Minutes of previous meeting** |
|  | Vote to approve the minutes of the previous meeting:  For: 6  Against: 0  Abstain: 0  **The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.** |
| 5. | **Matters arising** |
|  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Action 01. JS to circulate the COP with Councillors once this document is formally approved and published** | The COP has not yet been published and so this action will roll to next Student Council.  **Action 01. JS to circulate the Code of Practice with Councillors once this document is formally approved and published** | | **Action 02. HJ to find out why the Indian Society’s membership fee is £25.00** | THB informed Council that HJ has contacted the Society but not yet received a response | | **Action 03. HJ to clarify set membership fee for the Cycling Club** | THB informed Council that the Cycling Club membership fee has not yet been set because it will be set according to Sports budgets over the summer. This is the same for all clubs. | | **Action 04. Councillors to send email to LC, lead NUS delegate, with their comments and thoughts about NUS candidates** | LC did not receive any feedback from Councillors | | **Action 05. JS to circulate a doodle poll to all Councillors and decide which date and time is best for the final Student Council of the year** | Action completed. All councillors filled in the doodle poll and it was decided that Monday 20th May in the afternoon suited the majority of councillors | | **Action 06. Councillors to give LC feedback on printing and REACH** | LC received some feedback from councillors. LC confirmed that the University are keeping the £10 printing credit and they will integrate printing on students’ REACH accounts too. | | **Action 07. JS to chase SU marketing for paper, fruit and veg design requests submitted on SB’s behalf** | JS spoke with the SU’s marketing team and these requests are being worked on | | **Action 08. Councillors to give AM feedback for other methods of how to display her body positivity results (other than poster)** | AM was not present at the meeting to feedback on this action point. | |
| Discussion Items | |
| 6. | WSU Democratic Governance Proposal |
|  | Councillors present all confirmed that they had read the governance proposal prior to this meeting.  **6.1 Background**  Towards the end of 2016, it was agreed by officers, members, and staff within the SU that the democratic governance structures and their documents were not fit for purpose, had various contradictions and contained out of date information. The SU conducted a review internally and formed the Governance Review Action Group (GRAG) to undertake the work and to report regularly to the Trustee Board on its progress. During the whole period of consultation, the SU consulted 1229 students regarding the SU’s governance.  THB talked through the research stemming from the consultation period and then went on to show Council the proposals drafted as a result. The SU is looking to get the proposal approved this year so that it can be implemented in 2020-21. He assured Councillors that the governance structure for the 2019-20 academic year would remain the same as it is now, with nothing from the proposal implemented. The SU would consult external stakeholders, university staff, and various groups of students to inform the proposal’s final draft.  **6.2. Full Time Officer Proposal**  6.2.1 Comments received about the Full Time Officer proposal   * A student was in favour of retaining the current full time officer model. Reasons for this included the fact that an organisation should have a clear leader. * Changing the name of President to co-president welfare and community would not make the role of President any clearer. According to the Big Worc Survey, the role of President was the most recognised by students and so renaming the President role to make the role clearer goes against this research. * There was a concern that if the President were to share their governance-related roles with the two Vice Presidents, it would mean that the VPE would have less time dedicated to Education, and the VPSA would have less time dedicated to Student Activities. * A student was in favour of the co-president model because they believe that all officers are equal as they have the same responsibilities and do the same amount of work. Therefore, they should be named the same to reflect this. * It is important that all full time officers are all called Presidents because they are all the leads (and therefore Presidents) of their own respective department e.g. President of Education and President of Student Activities. For the current role of President, there was a suggestion that this should be renamed to Students’ Union President instead of President Welfare and Community in order to retain the figurehead of the organisation. * Students liked the idea of the possibility of having a fourth full time officer to look after health/welfare and community (including volunteering)   **Action 02. SW and THB to look into the possibility of budgeting for a fourth full time officer**   * People are more likely to choose a President to attend an ad hoc event or meeting rather than a Vice President. Students argued that, if this is the case, it suggests that it is the culture that should be changed rather than the names of the officers. * Students agreed that, within the full time officer roles, the remit should clearly state that these roles are flexible and that all officers can get involved with other officers’ remits and help each other. This already happens in the SU but to have it in writing would make it formalised.   6.2.2. The group voted on whether they liked the idea of changing the current FTO model into a co-presidential model:  For: 2  Against: 5  Abstain: 1  6.2.3. Comments received from those who voted against the proposal included:   * Students do not like the names of the officers within the proposal * Students like the idea of all full time officers being called presidents within their own remit but they still like the idea of having a figurehead and clear leader * Students liked the way the officers’ responsibilities were split as this makes it clear what each officers’ remit is. Students were clear that they felt it was important for officers to attend meetings that are appropriate to them and their remit rather than just being invited because they are called the president * Students like the current officer structure and so would like it to remain the same * Students like the ‘Student Activities’ title as it is more inclusive and does not just limit the officer to just sports and society members. The current VPSA arranges volunteering and fundraising opportunities and they put on inclusive events for everybody such as the Colour Run. The VPSA is currently an officer who can engage all students. If the VPSA were to be renamed President Sports and Societies, then it would run the risk of excluding students who are not in a sports club or society * Students would like a fourth full time officer * If the issue is that students do not know what officers do, and that staff members only ever invite the president to meetings, then the problem lies with marketing, not the name. The student explained that it should not be about changing a name, but it should be more about explicit marketing as to what the officers’ remit includes   **6.3. Part Time Officer Proposal**  6.3.1 Comments received about the Part Time Officer proposal   * A student commented that balancing workload between being a part time officer and a chair is very difficult and takes up a lot of time. The officer role focuses on putting on events and representing all students across the entire university, whereas the chair role works within the society to ensure that the society is successful * A student suggested that, like the role of school rep, it might be worth the SU looking into providing a bursary for the network chairs because of such a large commitment. EM noted that School Reps are expected to do more work than a network chair in terms of the number of meetings they attend and the amount of students they represent. * Students like the word network as it sounds more inclusive than the word society. A student who would not feel comfortable joining a society would be more inclined to join a network.   6.3.2. The group voted on whether they liked the idea of changing the current PTO model into a network model:  For: 7  Against: 1  Abstain: 0  **6.4. Meeting Structure**  6.4.1 Comments received about the meeting structure proposal   * All those present liked the idea of each officer being able to work with a small group as they felt this would enhance their campaigns and enable them to do more * Students questioned the representation of the voting system within Team Worc Committees. Students felt that it was not representative to allow 1 vote per 70 members of a sports club and 1 vote per 7 members of a society.   6.4.2 The group voted on whether they liked the idea of the proposed meeting structure:  For: 8  Against: 0  Abstain: 0  6.4.3 The group voted on whether they liked the idea of a reduction in the size of Executive Committee:  For: 8  Against: 0  Abstain: 0  6.4.4 The group voted on whether they liked the idea of the Ideas Forum:  For: 8  Against: 0  Abstain: 0 |
| Approval Items | |
| 7. | Motions |
|  | KW noted that Council were not quorate and so all votes taken for motions would be added to any votes sent in by councillors via email after the meeting. 9 votes are needed to reach quoracy.  **7.1. 2018-19\_010 Standardisation of Blackboard**  EM explained that the University currently uses Blackboard as their Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Students have repeatedly raised frustrations with the inconsistencies of Blackboard across modules and courses via module evaluation reports, surveys, change week, and through course rep feedback. The EU has adopted the Web Accessibility Directive to foster better access to websites and mobiles underpinning public services (in particular by people with disabilities and especially persons with hearing or vision impairments). The Web Accessibility Directive was transposed to UK law in September 2018 and has generated obligations for new websites from 2019, for pre-existing websites from 2020, and for all public sector apps from 2021.  EM noted that the VLE should be set up in a way that is accessible and easy. The VLE is an important part of the university experience and so should be maintained to a high standard based on a common set of rules and principles. Pre-populated Blackboard templates that forces Course Leaders to upload and write certain text in a specific and standardised structure would help this process. The university must act quickly in order to meet the requirements set out in the EU’s web accessibility directive.  If passed, Student Council would resolve to mandate the Vice President Education to lobby the University for standardised Blackboard pages.  Vote to approve 2018-19\_010 Standardisation of Blackboard  For: 9 *(3 votes were via email)*  Against: 0  Abstain: 0  **2018-19\_010 is approved by Council**  **7.2. 2018-19\_011 SU Against Fit to Sit**  EM explained that Fit to Sit is a policy that states that when a student sits an exam or submits an assignment, they are declaring themselves fit to do so. Fit, in this context, means that the student is feeling well and functioning “normally”. It therefore covers both health-related conditions as well as other personal circumstances. A Fit to Sit policy means that if a student sits an exam or submits an assignment, they cannot later claim mitigating circumstances or extenuating circumstances affecting their performance. This could have an adverse effect on students, especially those who face mental health difficulties. It also creates a high-risk scenario for students, which is not compatible with an inclusivity. EM noted that Education Council believes that there are a number of issues with the Fit to Sit policy including:   * Students may find it difficult to assess their own fitness to sit an exam. This may be an issue for students with mental health difficulties or if an incident happens influencing a students’ fitness immediately before an exam and they have not had time to consider the incident’s likely effect on their performance. * Students have grown up in a culture which encourages them to sit exams even if they are not feeling completely fit. Therefore, students are unlikely to consider not sitting an exam, regardless of their fitness to do so. * If a student does not sit an exam due to not feeling fit and their subsequent mitigating circumstances is not accepted, they will receive a mark of zero. This makes the decision a high-risk situation, and a gamble, which is not compatible with an inclusive approach to assessment and can lead to high stress levels.   If this motion is approved, Student Council will resolve to mandate the Vice President Education, School Reps, and any other elected officer to oppose any future attempts of UoW to implement a fit to sit policy.  A member of council suggested that point 2 of the motion suggests that Council discourages students to be dedicated to the course: “Students may also feel that sitting their exam or submitting coursework on time shows dedication to the course and may be reluctant not to do so.” There was also the issue of students perhaps taking advantage of the Fit to Sit policy so that they could retake an exam if they received a grade lower than expected. EM noted that a handful of students who are not eligible for mitigating circumstances would still claim mitigating circumstances. However, these students will not receive mitigating circumstances, as they are not eligible, and so will be unable to retake the exam.  Vote to approve 2018-19\_011 SU Against Fit to Sit  For: 8 *(3 votes were via email)*  Against: 0  Abstain: 1  **2018-19\_011 is approved by Council**  **7.3. 2018-19\_012 Deadlines and Multiple Assessments**  EM explained that the Course Leader currently does not review module assessment deadlines in line with other deadlines. This practice can lead up to assessment pile-ups for students (both Joint Honours and Single Honours). Multiple deadlines at the same time can have a detrimental effect on students and the quality of their work. The University via the Course Team and Leaders should regulate and review all assessment deadlines to avoid clusters. Assessments should not be within 48 hours of each other without reasonable justification. Exams should be held during assessment weeks and not at the expense of a week of teaching. The University should publish a set of principles based on student feedback that provides the course teams with guidance around assessment deadlines. These should also be made accessible to students.  Councillors argued that a cluster of deadlines is manageable if a student organises their time correctly. Most deadlines are submitted at the beginning of the year and this should be enough time for a student to learn when their deadlines are and work towards it. There was a suggestion that all assignment deadline dates should be published in advance so that students are able to manage their time effectively.  EM explained that if this motion were to be approved, Student Council would resolve to mandate the Vice President Education to lobby the University to put in processes that prevents the build-up of assignments.  Vote to approve 2018-19\_012 Deadlines and Multiple Assessments  For: 8 *(3 votes were via email)* Against: 0  Abstain: 0 |
| 8. | Approval of Clubs and Societies |
|  | KW noted that Council were not quorate and so the approval of clubs and societies would take place after the meeting via email. 9 votes are needed to reach quoracy. The Club and Society applications were circulated with all councillors so that they could make an informed decision. If Councillors had any questions about either application, they were told to email the VPSA.  **8.1. Women’s Futsal**  Vote to approve Women’s Futsal Application  For: 4  Against: 0  Abstain: 0  **8.2. Biomedical Society**  Vote to approve Biomedical Society Application  For: 4 Against: 0  Abstain: 0 |
| Reporting Items | |
| 9. | Officers’ reports – questions/comments |
|  | Officer Reports were circulated with Councillors; Councillors were told if they had any questions for the officers about their reports, to email them directly. |
| Any other Business | |
| 10. | Any other business |
|  | KW gave thanks to all Councillors for their dedication, hard work, and services over the last academic year. KW closed the meeting at 16:45. |

**Actions**

**Action 01. JS to circulate the Code of Practice with Councillors once this document is formally approved and published**

**Action 02. SW and THB to look into the possibility of budgeting for a fourth full time officer**