

ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION STUDENT COUNCIL
Agenda of meeting held on 9th February 2017 in Coleraine in LT8 at 17:00.

1. MINUTES

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved by Student Council.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Change to Incorporation (Verbal update)

The General Manager gave a brief update on why the Students' Union is considering to become an Incorporated business. The Students' Union is also waiting to hear back from the Charity Commission to confirm that UUSU has officially being recognised as Charity within Northern Ireland.

Further information was given in why the change to Incorporation was to take place. This primarily was to minimise the liability that the Trustees and the Trustee board face, in the circumstance of any financial issues.

UUSU is currently consulting solicitors and seeking legal advice before formally making this change. The documents will be template from NUS and will include the Memorandum and Articles of Association with all schedules formally becoming bye-laws.

The General Manager went into further detail surrounding the pension deficient within UUSU and many other Students' Unions across the United Kingdom. The window for transferring over the pension deficit is during the Summer and due to this if we don't become an Incorporation before Easter UUSU may wait until Spring 2018 before doing so.

A Student Councillor asked if UUSU will be able to benefit from additional funding as a registered Charity. The General Manager stated that this is indeed the case.

The General Manager further confirmed that we will be modelling the change on NUS documents, which have been used throughout many Students' Unions across the United Kingdom.

3. PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

The President give an update to Student Council on his activities and what UUSU has been doing. He informed Student Council that UUSU has had puppy days on campus to reduce stress and goats to encourage voting. It was further stated that Voting Registration forms were available to Student Councillors to obtain if they were currently not registered to vote.

The President stated that UUSU will host several teams that will enter into the Belfast marathon in sponsorship of the Mind Your Mood campaign. Any interested Student Councillors could get in touch if they so desired to take part for the good cause.

The President gave an update on the Graduation Policy that was recently passed and informed Student Council that a paper was being presented to the university regarding lowering the cost. This was initially presented by the Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Magee).

The Rent Rights campaign launched this week to provide students useful tips in how to rent within the private sector. It was stated that the President hopes to obtain individual experiences that could feed into the campaign.

The President informed Student Council that no Northern Irish HEI has submitted an application for year two TEF. Throughout the United Kingdom, 299 institutions have applied for TEF (inclusive of the provision awards).

The President urged Student Councillors to nominate themselves for the upcoming Student Officer elections if they desired to do so as nominations close Monday 13th February at 12:00.

The Senior Representative nominations open on Monday, with voting running alongside the Student Officer voting window. This will hopefully encourage a high voter turnout.

The Learning and Teaching Awards (LTAs) open on Monday 13th February. It was stated that if any Student Councillor knew of any outstanding practices occurring within teaching to highlight the individual to ensure recognition was given.

The Student Excellence Awards (SEAs) will also open soon and some awards will include individuals from Student Council. It was advised that if any individual wished to recognise contributions from others that sit on Student Council they could do so through this route.

Finally, the President stated that there are many elected roles available through NUS-USI and to get in touch if anyone needed further information.

4. STUDENT OFFICER REPORTS

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Belfast) gave an overview of his activities what he has been up to since the last Student Council. He was part of the working group to organise the Four Corners festival on the Belfast Campus. Several MLAs also attended. Further work has been done in relation to additional course costs that students may face whilst studying. It was further stated that a life-long

promise of having a goat on campus to encourage students to register to vote was successfully accomplished. There was a round of applause.

A Student Councillor informed the Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Belfast) that hidden course costs have been an ongoing issue on the Belfast Campus.

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Jordanstown) gave an overview of current activities. This include being elected the NUS-USI Woman's Officer. There was a round of applause.

A Student Councillor asked about the drug testing kits that was directly related to a previous policy presented to Student Council. It was stated that the kits have arrived and the campaign is currently being organised.

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Magee) stated that he has recently work on lowering the cost of graduation and organising goat logistics. Final confirmation is also being sought to have more room on the Magee Campus for societies. There is also further conversations internally about the empty bar space within the Magee Campus.

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) informed Student Council about creating and reviewing a survey about the campus to ensure that there is effective development on facilities, programmes and relevant activities. It was stated that over 250 students petting puppies in the 'pet-a-puppy' campaign to target stress.

The Sports President gave an overview of the activities within his role. The majority of time has been spent working on developing the Sports Strategy and consistently improving clubs on all campuses. A large amount of time within the second semester will be spent organising sporting events.

The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications gave a brief overview of the many campaigns that are currently being scheduled.

5. **CO-OPT MEMBERS**

The Chair informed Student Council that there are three students to be co-opted and asked for them to give a short introduction to who they are and what course they study.

Student Council voted in favour of co-opting Lauren Hunter.

Student Council voted in favour of co-opting Bradley Robinson.

Student Council voted in favour of co-opting Corina Liebi.

6. **SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Green Sub-Committee (Verbal update)

Matthew Bell gave a summary of the activities of the Green Sub-Committee and what has recently been done. It was stated that throughout the discussions the Sub-Committee will put forward plans to improve the Green Impact Award from a bronze to silver. This includes running the campaign surrounding divestment, a policy will was presented to Student Council previously in the year.

Governance Sub-Committee (Written update) (paper 1)

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) gave a summary of what was discussed and agreed in the Governance Sub-Committee during it's previous meeting. This included going through the list of recommendations that was put forward by the Sub-Committee.

The Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator also gave an introduction into the thinking behind some of the proposed changes and that the entire Schedule needed updated due to language being irrelevant. Further to this, an agreement was not reached in regards to give candidates the permission to use electronic devices within a fixed location, as determined by the Returning Officer. As this is an extremely important point, it is only right to give Student Council the right to debate this to see how we should proceed.

Many Student Councillors commented that it would be more effective if the Students' Union facilitated voting on electronic devices by providing iPads and volunteers/Brand Ambassadors to walk around each campus to gather votes.

The Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator informed Student Council that this idea had been discussed previously, however, the election website is not tablet/mobile friendly, so this might not be entirely effective. Further to this, this would require significant financial investment.

Several Student Councillors commented and suggested that the electronic devices should be limited to each of the candidates stalls to ensure that no foul play occurred.

A further Student Councillor commented that policing this activity in the way that is proposed will still not solve the issue that this happens behinds the Returning Officers back. Additionally, there may be a rise in complaints as some candidates may be forceful in how they approach voters.

The Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator noted that candidates would still not be allowed to negatively campaign against their fellow candidates or force voters to vote for them. They simply are allowed to provide a platform. If foul play was suspected they could have this privilege revoked.

A Student Councillor presented an discussion based around using the money to attempt to resolve the problem with apathy rather than use it on purchasing iPads, if that was to happen.

The Chair then brought the discussion to a close and asked Student Council to vote in favour, against or abstain in whether the Returning Officer will have the power to, at his/her discretion, allow candidates to use electronic devices within a location.

This was then put to a vote with sixteen vote for the motion and thirteen votes against the motion. This motion passed and the approved rules will come into effect in the upcoming Student Officer elections.

7. AMENDMENT TO SCHEDULE THREE (paper 2)

Amendments were brought forward and accepted by Viki Lutton.

The amended Schedule was put to a vote and clearly passed.

8. SOCIETY AFFILIATIONS

Horticultural Society (Coleraine) (paper 3a)

This was presented by Brendan Clarke. General aims were discussed including providing information and advice for all student wanting to grow plants.

This was clearly passed by Student Council.

Society of St. Vincent Paul (Coleraine) (paper 3b)

This was presented by the Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine).

This was clearly passed by Student Council.

St. John's Ambulance (Magee) (paper 3c)

This was presented by Thomas Lowe. The aim of the society was to provide students on campus the skills and knowledge of basic first aid skills.

A Student Councillor asked if this was to be ran through a division.

It was confirmed that this was the case and any insurance would be secured through the organisation.

The Sports President informed Thomas Lowe that this is something that has currently being investigated within many Sports Clubs. It was confirmed that if possible, this society could tie in with many matches or Sports Clubs.

This was clearly passed by Student Council.

Ulster Society of Student Engineers (Jordanstown) (paper 3d)

This was presented by the Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Jordanstown).

This was clearly passed by Student Council.

9. LAPSE POLICY DOCUMENT

Second Year Marking Policy (paper 4)

This was presented by the President and seconded by the Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Jordanstown). There were slight amendments to the policy to ensure that it will be as effective as possible in the coming years.

This was clearly passed by Student Council.

10. NUS CONFERENCE MOTIONS

Airport Expansion – #heathno (paper 5)

Matthew Bell give an overview of the policy and admitted that although this does not effect us directly, that we should still hold an opinion on this.

Thomas Lowe spoke against this policy and stated that this may negatively effect Northern Ireland and may also take trade away from Northern Ireland if there are not adequate flight paths into the United Kingdom.

Another Student Councillor spoke against the policy and informed Student Council that essentially we are too late to bring a policy like this forward and the decision has already been made.

Matthew Bell informed Student Council that this is not an internal policy and will be brought forwards for discussion at the NUS National Conference. It was further stated that there is still time to fight for this, it is never too late. This also provides us with a stage to bring something from UUSU to the NUS National Conference.

This was then put to Student Council and clearly defeated.

11. PUBLIC TRANSPORT (paper 6)

Matthew Bell gave a general introduction of this policy to Student Council and stated that it is for all students who rely on public transport and do not have access to cars. It was stated that the costs of public transport are increasing and it is

currently very expensive for a student to travel on a weekly basis to and from university.

An amendment was submitted that would change the nature of the wording around NUS-USI and how UUSU would work with them.

The amendment was accepted by the proposer.

The amended policy was then put to Student Council and clearly passed.

12. RE-ENROLLMENT FEES (paper 7)

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) gave a summary of the policy and how this has development.

The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications stated his support for this motion and that Student Council should vote for this.

Clarification was provided in the breakdown of costs and how and when this is sought by the university.

This was then put to Student Council and clearly passed.

13. LIBERATION OFFICERS (paper 8)

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) gave a summary of this policy and why it is so important to be implemented within UUSU. It was stated that this would make us a more progressive Students' Union.

Danielle Roberts spoke for the policy and stated that although we should pay for these roles it is a step in the right direction. This is a good starting point, however, more work would need to be done to make UUSU actually progressive in this field.

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) stated that mighty oaks all start with small acorns and that this definitely is a starting point. It was confirmed that this was a part-time position and students would be studying at the same time whilst carrying out this role.

Deborah Ferry stated that this should definitely go towards an edge award, which was agreed by the Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine).

This was put to Student Council and was clearly passed.

14. STUDENT SUPPORT FUND (paper 9)

This policy was introduced by Gary Spedding who stated the aims and objectives and why this was being brought forward. This essentially focused on the the lengthy process being inadequate to what actually needs to happen when students in dire financial circumstances.

Matthew Bell spoke for the policy and stated that an interview has recently been broadcast on UTV about how student finance in its essence flawed.

Shannon Mehar spoke for the policy, however, stated that she has heard many examples of how this system has been exploited.

The President spoke for the policy and stated that this is something that needs further work within the university.

Gary Spedding stated that in previous institutions that he has been a student in, it has taken roughly two weeks from the start of the application to payment.

This was then put to Student Council and clearly passed.

15. PAYMENT OF POSTGRADUTE FEES (paper 10)

Gary Spedding gave a summary of this policy and why it was urgent for action to be taken regarding this. He stated that payments of postgraduate fees need to be in line with the payment of postgraduate loans.

This was then put to Student Council and clearly passed.

16. NUS-USI ACCOUNTABILITY (paper 11)

Gary Spedding introduced this motion and gave a summary of why UUSU should hold the President of NUS-USI to account due to his recent trip to Israel.

An amendment was put forward and accepted by the proposer.

Deborah Ferry gave a summary of this policy and why this was important for Student Council to support it.

Gary Spedding spoke for the policy and gave a detailed explanation of why it was important to enforce an NUS-USI policy that was still in effect that was directly to do with this.

The President gave clarification surrounding all meetings held by NUS-USI in which students are allowed to participate and when these meetings take place.

A general discussion occurred around the historical context of the policy.

Gary Spedding acknowledged that a statement had been released by the President of NUS-USI explaining his actions. It was noted that it was important for Student Councillors to read this to ensure an informed decision was made.

This motion was deferred until the statement was printed and read by Student Council. *(This is continued at the end of minute 20)*

17. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL (paper 12)

Gary Spedding introduced this policy and stated that he has previously introduced this policy in previous institutions that he has been a member of.

This was then put to Student Council and clearly passed.

18. SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES (paper 13)

Gary Spedding gave a general introduction to this policy and stated that refugees from outside the United Kingdom have to pay international fees. In many circumstances this is completely unfeasible as these individuals may not have any or much money to pay these high level of fees.

A Student Council asked if this was lawful and were there any restrictions placed on a university.

It was stated that it should be at the universities desecration.

The President stated that this was actually raised at a previous Senate meeting. It was agreed back then that the university agreed to fund three refugees each academic year and that nothing had been done about it. Having this policy in effective will make sure that this will happen.

The President further stated that there is a cap on student numbers from Northern Ireland, however, there wasn't a cap on international students.

This was then put to Student Council and clearly passed.

19. ANTI-SEMITISM (paper 14)

Gary Spedding gave a general introduction of this policy to Student Council and why it is important to have a policy such as this even though the amount of students may be quite few at Ulster University.

It was stated that this year that many activities happen, with most recently leaflets being distributed in UK higher education institutions denying the Holocaust actually happened.

It was further stated that with the rise of the extreme right everyone must be cautious, and having this policy would strengthen UUSU's position.

A Student Councillor stated that a Bullying and Harassment Policy should cover all groups of students and singling one group out may lead to several policies essentially attempting to do the same thing.

Gary Spedding stated that policies that singled this group out. It was further stated that if any Student Councillor thought a single group was being oppressed that they should bring something forwards to Student Council to highlight this. The Anti-Semitism Policy was being brought forward as there had been many queries and worries highlighted by Jewish students. This was created to reflect this.

It was further stated that a recent attack happened on a Belfast Synagogue and as of yet, no individuals or groups had been held to account for this.

There was a general discussion around if denying the holocaust was considered free speech or hate speech.

Gary Spedding stated that there was a difference in the freedom of speech and hate speech. Someone denying the Holocaust is considered hate speech.

This was then put to Student Council and clearly passed.

20. JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOR PALESTINE (paper 15)

Gary Spedding stated that this is the same policy which is currently held by NUS-USI. Currently no country have placed sanction's on Israel for their illegal occupation of Palestine. This policy is about recognising that within certain conflicts there is an unbalance of power and that Israel, on a daily basis, is violating Palestinian people.

Currently around 27 individual Students' Union around the United Kingdom have similar policies.

Mark Francos stated that this is of course a very delicate matter and that he supports a two-state solution. It was further stated that it may not be in the interests of UUSU to support this as this has little to do with us. It was further stated that we may be better focused on matters that focus directly to students.

A Student Councillor asked if it was appropriate to compare apartheid in South Africa to what is happening within Israel.

Gary Spedding stated that this was not the case and no comparison was being made within the policy.

It was further stated that there is a list of organisaitons that are involved with human right violation within Israel online and if any Student Councillor is interested the information is out there.

The President stated that he doesn't know enough about the issue to vote so he shall be abstaining. There are complexities which currently are not fully understood within UUSU to ensure the effectiveness of this policy.

Gary Spedding stated that passing this policy did not mean that every item and piece of clothing within UUSU shops should be banned. Simple things can be taken place.

The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications spoke against the policy and put forward a procedural motion that this is should not be put to Student Council, this was seconding by the Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine).

Student Council then debated if this motion should be put to a vote.

Gary Spedding stated that it Student Council should be allowed to have a vote and that democracy should prevail. The issues within South Africa were resolved and that was a delicate and complex matter, such as this.

There was a general discussion that this should be taking to a vote.

The procedural motion was then put to a vote and pass (16 voted for and 15 voted against).

The President stated that he did not disagree with the spirit of the motion, however, disagreed with the resolves section.

The Chair then ceased any further discussion on this motion has nothing new was being added to the debate.

This motion was then put to Student Council and failed to pass (8 vote for, 16 voted against, 7 abstained).

Student Council returned to the discussion surrounding the NUSUSI Accountability motion.

A general discussion was had about other individuals that may have attended similar events and that Student Council were not singling out the President, but in fact holding him to account.

A Student Councillor stated that if he wasn't there as an NUS-USI representative and that if he was there on annual leave surely he wasn't representing the organisation and therefore not representing the students.

A Student Councillor asked what the policy meant by accountable. Gary Spedding stated that as an elected representative he should be held to account by the members who voted for him, which are the students of UUSU.

The Chair then ceased any further discussion on this motion has nothing new was being added to the debate.

This amended motion was then put to Student Council and failed to pass (9 vote for, 15 voted against, 4 abstained).

21. TABLED QUESTIONS

There are no formal questions tabled.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Thomas Lowe stated that there was of benefit to meet in between Student Council meetings to build a community within each campus and to discuss the issues that will be coming up in the next meeting. It was further stated that there was

dissatisfaction amongst the Student Councillors from the Magee campus that a meeting had not occurred on the campus.

23. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled to occur on Tuesday 21st March on the Belfast Campus at 17:00.