

**ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION STUDENT COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in Jordanstown.**

**PRESENT STUDENT COUNCILLORS:-** Elliot Lyness, Diarmaid Dixon, Shannen Maher, Ariyan Saadat, Lisa McKenna, Rebekah McBride, Richard McIlwaine, Katie Murray, Nicole Clinton, Oliver McKee, Deborah Ferry, Megan McDonagh, Nicole Kelly, Jack Morgan, Danielle Roberts, Stephen Ruddy, Simana Ale, Tihana Vlasisavljevic, Séamas de Faoite, Fiona Nicholson, Meghan Downey, Robert Millar, Matthew Bell, Mark Francos, Kelly Thompson, Eoghan Breen, Richard Bullick, Gary Spedding, Jennifer Ofodile, Jay Burbank, Ross Magee, Karolina Skeivyte

**PRESENT STUDENT OFFICERS:-** Colum Mackey (President), Hannah Rooney (Vice-President Academic Student Affairs Jordanstown), Kevin McStravock (Vice-President Academic Student Affairs Coleraine), Ben Johnson (Vice-President Academic Student Affairs Magee), Micky Quigg (Vice-President Campaigns and Communications) and James O'Mullan (Sports President)

**IN ATTENDANCE:-** Avril Honan (Student Engagement Manager) and Stuart Cannell (Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator)

**APOLOGIES:-** Conan Meehan (Vice-President Academic Student Affairs Belfast), Aaron Goldring, Shanon Woulahan, David O'Hale, Robert Banham, Emma Bonner, Aaron Spiers, Victoria Lutton, Stuart Canning, Anne Sheridan, Peter Higgins, William Smith, Xiaoshi Guo, Brendan Clarke, Charlotte Lau, Chloe Gibson, Rebecca Starkey, Stephanie Bruce, Carol Rhonda Burns, Claire Brammeld, Benedict Dadebo, Samuel Holmes, Eoin Woods, Brian Doherty, Tom Logue, Eimear Blaney, Odhran Ruiseil

**1. MINUTES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the second Student Council meeting of the current academic year. The minutes from the previous meeting, held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, were approved.

**2. MATTERS ARISING**

Update of previously passed policies

The President updated Student Council on all policies passed that are currently in effect within the Students' Union and what resolutions have been achieved since they have passed.

Elliot Lyness questioned the outcome of the Student Manifesto Policy and stated that a manifesto was indeed created, however, never acted upon due to the NUS-USI manifesto being created.

Universities response to Brexit letter

The President updated Student Council on the University's position regarding Brexit. It was stated that a paper in relation to this will be presented to senate and that the Students' Union will comment on this once available.

### Outcomes of Sexual Health campaign on Magee Campus

The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications updated Student Council on the activities within the Students' Union in relation to sexual health clinics and sexual health awareness campaigns and stated that a sexual health campaign will be organised for the second semester.

### Faculty restructure within the University

The Student Engagement Manager gave an update to Student Council in relation to the university's internal restructure. This entails moving from six facilities to four, with an interim year that we can currently in. There will be four executive deans and three pro-deans that will assist with the workload. Additionally, there are three provosts within the four campuses. The Provost within Jordanstown Campus has already resolved the ongoing issue with Wi-Fi within the halls of residence, which was an ongoing issue for some time.

Gary Spedding asked about staff redundancies within the University due to this restructure and what the Students' Union is doing because of this. The President stated that there have been no compulsory redundancies and they have all been voluntary to date. As the President sits on the relevant committee that addresses this internal business, he will be one of the first to know if compulsory redundancies are due to be carried out within the University and in turn will alert Student Council.

The Student Engagement Manager gave a summary of some of the courses that are closing and issues that they are currently facing. It was stated that if any Student Councillors are being effected because of this they should get in touch.

## **3. PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS**

The President gave an update of his activities during the previous three weeks. This included that Ulster University have been awarded the most improved student experience through the Times Higher Education 2016.

The Students' Union is currently undertaking a halls survey to find out what additional issues are present within the student body.

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) will be run in the next semester. This will introduce a new Quality Assurance Structure system in which Universities are judged through an accredited Gold, Silver and Bronze. Within England the TEF is linked to the rise in tuition fees and currently this is not proposed to occur within Northern Ireland.

There are current plans to develop a Medical School within the Magee Campus and an update will be available for Student Council in the future.

The Students' Union has worked to secure a designated pray space within the Belfast Campus. This has been an ongoing issue for some time and it is a welcome resolution.

The President stated that NUS-USI have started their campaign for 'fund out future', which revolves around the lack of funding for the higher education section within Northern Ireland and the potential raise in fees.

The President wanted to thank Jodie McAneaney for her hard work as a Student Activities Coordinator and that her work was most appreciated. Additionally, the President wished Jodie all the best in her future job and stated that she will be missed within the Students' Union.

The President informed Student Council that nominations for national conferences will close at 12:00 on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December and if they wish to put themselves forward time is running out.

**ACTION:** For the Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator to circulate details regarding the nomination window to Student Councillors.

The President gave a general overview of the upcoming Annual General Meeting which will be held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December. All students are welcome to attend.

Any questions relating to these issues discussed would be taken at the end of the Student Officer Reports.

#### **4. STUDENT OFFICER REPORTS**

The Student Officers gave a summary of their activities which included, but not limited to the Green Impact Sub-Committee; sports strategy; pink training; attending the national demonstration in London and bus services in Coleraine.

Matthew Bell asked the Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) about the campaign in relation to rental rights. This campaign is to be run within the second semester of the current academic year.

Elliot Lyness asked the President about the reports in general and that they had gone off the standard format. There was a further comment about where the pictures had went. It was felt that the current format makes it a bit more difference to read.

Further to it was asked about the National Student Survey boycott and what update there was. The President stated that the ballot has not been called yet to call a referendum. Whether Ulster University Students' Union boycotted the National Student Survey would be a matter for Student Council, if this was triggered.

Elliot Lyness further asked about if there was anything in the pipe-line to invalidate the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The President stated

there were no current plans within the student union movement to invalidate the TEF.

There was a further query in relation to the minutes from the Trustee Board not being available on the Students' Union website.

**ACTION:** For the Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator to circulate the last set of minutes from the Trustee Board to Student Council.

## 5. **CO-OPT MEMBERS**

Bethlehem Negash was co-opted onto Student Council as a Jordanstown Open-Seat Councillor.

## 6. **SOCIETY AFFILIATIONS**

### The Disaster Club (Jordanstown)

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Jordanstown) informed Student Council that the society still have yet to submit a constitution. The Chair then put this to a vote to defer until the next meeting. This clearly passed.

**ACTION:** To inform the committee of The Disaster Club to submit their constitution.

### Socialist Society (Coleraine)

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) gave a summary to date of the Socialist Society and that their original Chairperson has since stood down and they have only two committee members, as our paperwork and correspondence suggests. As there was no representative from the Socialist Society to speak on behalf of them, and due to the issues being raised in the previous Student Council meeting, the Chair then put this to a vote to defer until the next meeting. This clearly passed.

**ACTION:** To inform the Socialist Society of the result and to obtain updated paperwork, if appropriate, for the next Student Council meeting.

### BLW Society (Coleraine)

Vanessa Onuoha, the Chairperson of the society, gave a general introduction to the society and the aims and objectives that they are attempting to achieve. The society wishes to showcase the talents of the members in a positive way, such as Vanessa and other members writing their own songs and putting on a performance.

A video was played showing a performance that was set up through the BLW society.

It was stated that the BLW societies, as a wider movement, have already been set up in several universities within the United Kingdom and Ireland.

It was further stated that the BLW society could not be kept under the Christian Union title as BLW is its own brand and they wish to build on the BLW name. The overall aim is to create leaders within the society to then go forth and create additional BLW societies.

A Student Councillor asked how many members are generally within each society in other universities. It was stated that there are usually around 20-30 members within each society.

Danielle Roberts questioned the aim that some BLW groups have in relation to telling members not to go to the doctor. Vanessa stated that within the society that if individuals are sick, they do not tell them not to go to the doctor. The group hold healing seminars, which Vanessa stated, can be seen as controversial, however, it is within their faith belief.

Another question was raised in relation to the scandal to do with money laundering within the BLW movement. Vanessa stated that as a movement this is entirely self-funded and that she was unaware of any money being laundered.

Matthew Bell questioned the need for the BLW society as the Christian Union already exists and it is entirely non-demonical. Vanessa stated that she is aware that both societies are Christian-faith based and non-denominational, however, there was room for both to exist.

Matthew Bell put forward a procedural motion that this vote was to be conducted through a secret ballot, which was seconded by Elliot Lyness. The Chair then put this to a vote and was clearly passed.

The Chair informed Student Council that we will prepare the ballot papers and the vote will occur over the break, with the announcement being made at the end of the meeting.

#### Biomedical Science Society (Coleraine)

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) gave a breakdown of the society. The Chair then put this to a vote and was clearly passed.

#### Entrepreneurship Society (Jordanstown)

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Jordanstown) gave a breakdown of the society. The Chair then put this to a vote and was clearly passed.

#### Conservative Society (Magee)

Jay Burbank, a committee member from the Conservative Society, gave a general summary of the societies aims and objectives.

Elliot Lyness has made a point of information in relation to signatures required to affiliate a society as the Conservative Society only had ten. The Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator informed Elliot that as stated in the constitution and schedules a society only needs ten signatures of support to become affiliated and that we currently ask for 15 to show additional support. It was general agreed that the affiliation documents for a society should be updated to reflect this.

The Chair then put this to a vote and was clearly passed.

**ACTION:** For the Students' Union to update the affiliation documents to accurately reflect the constitution and schedules.

#### Linux User Group Society (Magee)

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Magee) gave a breakdown of the society. The Chair then put this to a vote and was clearly passed.

### 7. **LAPSE POLICY DOCUMENT**

#### Good Relations Policy

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Jordanstown) gave a general update on the amended policy. There were several formatting issues that are yet to be resolved, however, these will be resolved in the next few days. The Chair then put this to a vote and was clearly passed.

#### Political Expression Framework Policy

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Jordanstown) gave a general update on the amended policy. There were several formatting issues that are yet to be resolved, however, these will be resolved in the next few days. The Chair then put this to a vote and was clearly passed.

### 8. **BREXIT POLICY**

The Chair announced that two amendments have been tabled with one being accepted by the proposer, and thus absorbed within the policy, and one being rejected and thus up for debate.

The President gave a general introduction of the policy to Student Council and stated why they should support this policy.

A Point of Information was put forward that the Government have secured funding for Higher Education until 2020, however, it was stated that it might be 2019. There was no definitive answer to this query.

The proposer of the second amendment spoke in favour of the overall policy and why the second addition would add more emphasis on Northern Ireland's position within the European Union and this should be sought after as a resolution.

The President spoke against the amendment and noted that he voted remain, however, as the result was to leave the European Union that he accepts the result. The policy gives general aims and objectives and does not go into specifics or get too political in the outcomes.

Danielle Roberts spoke against the amendment and stated that the tone was too political and not in the interests of the students.

The Chair then put the amendment to a vote which was rejected.

The Chair then asked Student Council if anyone else wanted to speak for or against the amended policy.

The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications spoke for the policy and urged that Student Council vote for this policy for the interest of students within Ulster University.

The Chair then put this amended policy to a vote and it was clearly passed.

## **9. SOCIETY FUNDING POLICY**

Elliot Lynes introduced the policy and described what this could achieve if passed by Student Council. It was stated that the budget has remained £8,000 for a number of years, however, this use to be four separate budgets of £2,000 for each campus.

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Jordanstown) spoke for this motion and stated that societies needed more money to effectively operate and also an easier system to access their own finances.

Matthew Bell spoke for the Policy and was potentially suggesting an amendment in relation to introducing a sustainability review that societies would undertake to have access to additional finance. The Chair asked if Matthew Bell and Elliot Lyness would discuss this amendment to the side whilst additional speakers presented.

Katy Murray spoke in favour of this policy and gave an example where her society applied for £90 of finance from the Students' Union and only successfully received £50. It was stated that the current model in which societies can access money is wholly unsuitable to how students within societies need to access it.

The amendment that Matthew Bell wished to propose in relation to introducing a sustainability review was withdrawn.

A Student Councillor went into detail that a lot of funding can be used for transport between the campuses and this will automatically drain what little financial assistance they are provided with.

Another Student Councillor spoke of the pressure that is put on a society due to the restriction placed on funding. Having a bigger budget would help with this.

The President spoke in favour of this and told Student Council that if this was passed it would need to be discussed at the Trustee Board before being fully implemented within the Students' Union.

Deborah Ferry put forward a Point of Information and stated that it was difficult to access the money from the Students' Union for the use of societies and this needs to be reviewed.

An amendment was put forward in relation to giving Student Council the power to award additional financial support, in exceptional circumstances, to societies. This was then accepted by the proposer of the policy.

The Chair then put the amended policy to a vote and it was clearly passed.

#### **10. DIVESTMENT POLICY**

Elliot Lyness presented the policy and gave a general summary of the aims and objectives that it set out to achieve.

There were no further speakers for or against the policy.

The Chair then put this policy to a vote and it was clearly passed.

#### **11. MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING POLICY**

The Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs (Coleraine) introduced the policy and stated how important it was and to have student representation on the development of this strategy to ensure that this was effectively developed.

The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications spoke for the policy and stated that this was incredibly important for the student body. If this was to be passed it would show the University how significant this issue is and how important it would be to have student involvement within the development of this strategy.

The Chair then put this policy to a vote and it was clearly passed.

#### **12. LIVING WAGE POLICY**

Matthew Bell introduced the policy and spoke of the general aims and objectives that it sought to achieve.

Danielle Roberts put forward an amendment in relation to the wording of legal entitlements that these employers had. The proposer of this policy accepted the amendment.

A Student Councillor queried ultimately what effect passing this policy would have.

Séamas de Faoite spoke for the policy and stated that this was a great idea for the market place. This was not about forcing employers to get the accreditation but it was an added incentive.

Katy Murray spoke against the motion and stated that employers legally do not have to disclose what they pay. This scheme might not achieve the aims that it is setting out. An example that was given was the employer Radox and the contract that this employer might give students.

Katy Murray put forward an amendment on the policy in relation to ensuring that the placements and jobs that are being advertised show exactly what the role entails. The proposer of the policy accepted the amendment.

The President spoke for the policy and stated that it would ultimately be a positive move for the student body.

Elliot Lyness spoke for the policy and stated that it is really important for a students' union to have and that they should stick up for all types of students. An example was given as previous placement student he was unfairly treated by his employer in relation to pay.

The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications spoke for the policy and that it was incredibly important that we are looking out for the students and ensure they get high quality jobs..

The Chair then put the amended policy to a vote and it was clearly passed.

### **13. NAME BADGE POLICY**

The Chair informed Student Council that there has been a tabled amendment which was accepted by the proposer of the policy. This was to change the word 'Christian' with 'first' in relation to a person's first name.

Matthew Bell gave a general summary of the policy and that this would help improve the relationships between students and non-academic staff members. It was stated that this is not just beneficial to students for clarity but also beneficial to staff as well.

A Student Councillor spoke against the motion and stated that it is not entirely necessary for us to pass this and the resolution would not be worth the hassle of implementing something like this.

Mark Francos spoke for the policy and stated that the NHS campaign was hugely successful in helping break down formal barriers.

Katy Brown against the policy and stated that in some circumstances that it creates strange connections and circumstances between a person who wears the name badge and a person who is not wearing a name badge.

The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications spoke for the policy and stated that he feels that knowing a persons first name from the beginning of a conversation helps break down formal barriers and creates more of a personal environment.

A point of information then put in relation to whom this policy addressed. It was stated that this would not include academic staff members.

The Chair then put this policy to a vote and it was clearly passed.

#### **14. CUPS IN STUDENT UNION CATERING POLICY**

The President gave a general overview of this policy and the aims and objectives that it sets forth. This will build on the good work that the Green Impact Sub Committee is currently undertaking.

Matthew Bell spoke for this policy and stated why that this was a great idea and that for many students university is the first experience of the 'real' world and it is better to provide them an green and sustainable option within their cup selection.

The Chair then put this policy to a vote and it was clearly passed.

#### **15. TABLED QUESTIONS**

The Chair informed Student Council that the BLW society is now affiliated and that the majority of Student Council in favour of affiliation.

Gary Spedding asked if Student Officers would speak and work with the Union of Jewish Students to see what could achieved collaboratively in relation to specific issues. The President stated that the Union of Jewish Students have several programmes in which he has participated in and he is currently in contact with the Union to work closer together on relevant issues.

There are currently 10 registered Jewish students within Ulster University. It was stated that even though this is a very low percentage of the overall student population with Ulster University, their experience is still incredibly important and their needs should be addressed.

Stephen Ruddy asked if the Student Officers are running an exam stress campaign leading into the end of term. The Vice-President Campaigns and Communications stated that this will be organised through the last two weeks of the semester.

Gary Spedding asked if there were any plans being discussed in relation to preparing for the Higher Education Bill that is currently going through parliamentary process. It is currently in the process of going through the House of Lords and will potentially become an Act of Parliament during Spring. It was further stated that if the Students' Union would potentially bring a policy forward to the next Student Council meeting in regards to this and that the Students' Union should approach certain MLAs to seek a response regarding the Higher Education Bill.

**ACTION:** For the President to write to Martin McGuinness to seek a response in relation to the Higher Education Bill.

**16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Catriona Doyle was co-opted onto Student Council as a Jordanstown Open-Seat Councillor.

**17. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The date for the next meeting is Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February in Coleraine and shall begin at 17:15.

## ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION STUDENT COUNCIL

### Action Sheet

| <b>Minute</b> | <b>Action</b>  | <b>By Whom</b>                      | <b>Follow Up</b> |
|---------------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 3             | For the Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator to circulate details regarding the nomination window to Student Councillors.             | Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator | N/A              |
| 4             | For the Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator to circulate the last set of minutes from the Trustee Board to Student Council.          | Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator | N/A              |
| 6             | To inform the committee of The Disaster Club to submit their constitution.   | Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator | Student Council  |
| 6             | To inform the Socialist Society of the result and to obtain updated paperwork, if appropriate, for the next Student Council meeting. | Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator | Student Council  |
| 6             | For the Students' Union to update the affiliation documents to accurately reflect the constitution and schedules.                    | Societies Activities Coordinator    | N/A              |
| 15            | For the President to write to Martin McGuinness to seek a response in relation to the Higher Education Bill.                         | President                           | Student Council  |