



MINUTES OF 2019-20 STUDENT COUNCIL

Thursday 30 April 2020 15:00 – 17:00

via Zoom

Present: James Allanson (Disabilities Officer) (DIS); Jamie Andrews (Chair of School, Performance and Media Production) (PMP); Adam Dickson (Postgraduate & Mature Officer) (PGM); Holly Hinchley (Chair of School, Humanities, Religion & Philosophy) (HRP); Tim Holmes (President of the Students' Union) (PSU); Raana Jefferson (Chair of School, Art, Design & Computer Science) (ADC); Kirsten Jolley (President of Wellbeing & Diversity) (PWD); Ella Langston (Chair of School, Science, Technology & Health) (STH); Jenny Marchant (President of Education) (PED); Andreas Pavlou (Deputy Chair) (DCSC); Kalen Reid (LGBTQ+ Officer) (LGBTQ+); Catherine Rowan (International Officer) (INT)

In attendance: Chris Smith (Postgraduate and Mature Officer-elect) (PGM-e); Emily Balmer (LGBTQ+ Officer-elect) (LGBTQ+-e)

Apologies: Tarry Bowen; Eve Clowes; Laura Grove; Millie Whiteford

Absent without apologies: Hannah Jefferies

Staff in attendance: Dan Grayson (Information & Administration Assistant) (IAA); Zaki Kaf Al-Ghazal (Student Voice Coordinator) (SVC); Paul Murtough (Student Opportunities Manager) (SOM)

1. Welcome & Introduction

DCSC welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Councilors for participating via Zoom. The logistics of the meeting were explained: Motions would be proposed or presented by the proposer or the President under whose remit the motion falls. Any discussion points will then be posted by Councilors in the chat box, and DCSC will call to speak any Councilor whose point warrants further discussion or explanation. The Poll feature will then be used to conduct the vote.

2. Minutes of 13 March 2020 and Matters Arising

Council **approved** the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and accurate reflection of that meeting.

Matters arising. DCSC reported that due to the COVID-19 crisis, no progress had been made on the matters arising and these would be deferred to the next meeting.

3. Consideration of EC14 – Support for Research Students, submitted by a student

Motion:

That the President of Education be mandated to provide More support for research students, particularly MSc by Research students, regarding the COVID-19 situation, and for the university to look at a partial tuition fee reduction for the loss of services that are advertised with a research degree.

Why do I want to see this change?

Currently, we have only been suggested to temporarily suspend studies, which is not financially feasible for many students. Many of the features advertised with a research degree are no longer available e.g. graduate centre, access to library and physical books, access to labs/specialist department equipment, training events/meetings/conferences. This makes it difficult for us to show research development and develop skills that could be used for career development. Whilst we can arrange with our supervisors the changes to our research e.g. data collection, we are still without many of the resources that the university offer. Many of us feel like we have been forgotten about and are paying a lot of tuition fees for a restricted experience.

PED presented the Motion. PED noted the concerns raised during the current COVID-19 crisis and the huge impact the change in delivery has had on all students, particularly research students. PED is in support of the Motion; however, it may not be feasible to introduce a partial tuition fee reduction. This would have to be a national decision taken by the Department of Education. PED fully supports the first part of the Motion.

PSU noted the difficulty of the Motion as tuition fees are not paid for services/facilities or contact time (in Postgraduate circumstances) with lecturers, rather being access to the degree and the awarding powers of the University. PSU agreed that access to resources in the current circumstances are a concern, and online resources may be a more effective approach.

STH agreed with the difficulty, and that all students face similar issues.

Lobbying. PWD suggested that the Motion might be better worded to mandate the incoming Officer team to lobby the University for compensation/renumeration. PMP agreed that the motion should be reworded such that it is not an impossible ask. The Motion should also be extended to mandate the Postgraduate & Mature Officer.

Council agreed to a Procedural Motion proposed by PWD to redraft the Motion. The redrafted Motion reads:

Considering the circumstances surrounding COVID-19, the President of Education and Postgraduate & Mature Officer are mandated to work with the University to provide more support for research students, particularly MSc by Research students; and to lobby the University for potential renumeration of research students.

Council was asked to agree to the redrafted Motion.

FOR: 10

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAINING: 1

MOTION AGREED TO

4. Consideration of *EC15 – Remote Learning*, submitted by the Disabilities Officer

Motion:

That the President of Education and Disabilities Officer are mandated to work with the University to commit to continuing to use online/remote learning where possible.

Why do I want to see this change?

Many disabled students and students with mental health problems sometimes find it hard to get to campus for all their lectures, I would like to see a commitment from the SU and YSJ to continue using online/remote learning where possible for students who wish to be engaged in the course but find it difficult or impractical to make it to certain lectures.

DIS proposed the Motion.

PED noted that there had previously been pushback from the University for such provisions, but that now they are in place, the University should be encouraged to keep them in place.

PSU asked if the words “where best for the student” should be added to the Motion. This was met with agreement. However, discussions over implementation would be had later, so it was agreed that the Motion should read as stands.

HRP reported that she had spoken to staff and students who think that current remote learning provisions should be carried on and these have been incredibly useful for students who cannot get to campus.

LGBTQ+ noted that this is a crucial provision for the University as disabled students and students with mental health issues have been told that they cannot take part remotely, and if the University retracts the remote learning provisions now in place, it will emphasize that the University does not feel it worth investing in resources for such students. PWD agreed with this.

Use. ADC noted the need to have students apply for such provisions, so as not to have a drop in engagement. DIS replied that these provisions should ideally form part of a student’s Learning Support Plan. PWD noted the difficulty with that, as some lecturers do not abide by Learning Support Plans.

Council was asked to agree to the Motion.

FOR: 10

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAINING: 1

MOTION AGREED TO

5. Consideration of *EC16 – Universities Careers Guidance*, submitted by the International Officer

Motion:

That the President of the Students’ Union and President of Education be mandated to work with the University to implement mandatory careers guidance to be implemented into every course, preferably in the second semester of second year, as then individuals have more time to decide options before the stress of third year creeps in.

Why do I want to see this change?

Coming from the school of sport, I'm lucky that one lecture in week 10 of this semester was scheduled for a 'careers talk' (due to current circumstances I don't know if we'll get that

lecture) regardless, that is way too late to apply for post grads and grad schemes etc. I have used the careers team and been quite active in trying to find volunteering to build experience, as I think you have a massive part to play in building experience for yourself, but I think it should be a part of your course that you learn what you can do with your degree. After all you've just spent three years completing it!

Speaking with international students, the careers team also lack knowledge for international students looking to return to work in their home countries as many move back after their education in the U.K. is complete.

I know some courses who have a whole module dedicated to 'Enterprise and Employability' and I know it might not be feasible to have a whole module, but a few careers lectures sprinkled across the second year program or something similar would be beneficial.

I know I'm not the only one in this position. Finishing university is a scary experience and students should feel prepared for their next step.

INT proposed the Motion.

PSU noted that this Motion should be within the remit of PED as well.

PMP reported that his course had a professional portfolio module, but that other courses did not. There is a notable disparity of careers/professional support across programs. DIS agreed that a centralized approach from the University would be preferable.

PED agreed with the Motion, noting the preference for the University to centralize their careers support. This would also better support international students. PWD agreed and noted that most courses already have a work-based module in second year with careers guidance. HRP reported that she had such a module and greatly benefited from it. DIS agreed that it should be a full module.

LGBTQ+-e noted that people who want to go into SLT often have to take a gap year because they miss out on things in their third year which they should have done but did not know they should be done.

STH reported that following meetings with sports and health lecturers, they are looking at enhancing the help and support available for third years, who they are aware are entering into a tricky job market. However, STH believes that this support should be available throughout the entire course.

Council was asked to agree to the Motion.

FOR: 10

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAINING: 1

MOTION AGREED TO

6. Consideration of *EC17 – London Support Services*, submitted by the President of Wellbeing & Diversity

Motion:

That the Students' Union and Sabbatical Officers lobby for better support services for students at the London Campus.

Why do I want to see this change?

As a Union, we have received many queries from students at the London Campus about how we can help and support them when they are down in London and we are in York. We have also seen many Academic Advice cases from these students, with the majority of our

students in London being international. I believe it should be a priority of the Union and Sabbatical Team 20/21 to extend our reach and ensure better support for these students moving forward, and to work with the University and Director of the London Campus to do so.

PWD proposed the Motion.

LGBTQ+ noted that London students have no support. They have spoken to London students when students have called into the SU and feels that having to tell students that either the student must travel to York or the staff member must travel to London is ridiculous.

There was broad support for the Motion.

Council was asked to agree to the Motion.

FOR: 10

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAINING: 1

7. Consideration of *EC18 – Private Accommodation Advice*, submitted by the President of Wellbeing & Diversity

Motion:

That the Students' Union and President of Wellbeing and Diversity work with the University and City of York Council to improve support for students in private housing; and lobby for an advice service of some kind, either with the University or the Students' Union, so that students are not left without any housing advice or support after leaving University-managed accommodation.

Why do I want to see this change?

At YSJU and YJSJU, there are no provisions in place to support students who are tenants in private rented accommodation, apart from financial aid via the student support fund. Whilst this is beneficial, issues with housing go way beyond this. Students have issues with rental payments, but also: finding guarantors, finding housemates, housemate disputes, knowing their rights as a tenant, knowing the ins and outs of contracts, to name a few.

As PWD this year, I have had many students come to me about the issues above, and I have signposted to the hardship fund and City of York Council, but I wish there was more than could be done to help students, as the stress that comes with many of these issues has an impact. There are also students, such as WP, Estranged and Care Leavers, who cannot get support from family financially, or lean on them for advice.

For context, many students who apply for the University support fund apply to help with housing related issues (which has soared during the Covid-19 Crisis). I believe more than ever that students need as much support as possible in regard to housing.

PWD proposed the Motion.

HRP agreed, noting that she struggled in her second year with housemates for various reasons, and with landlords and contracts, so it would be helpful to have a service or someone to go to when needed. At present, there is no one to turn to when issues arise, apart from getting parents involved, should that luxury be had.

DIS asked if it would be possible for this support to be extended to those leaving student housing for private accommodation. PWD noted that it could be possible, but initially the focus should be on current students.

There was broad support for the Motion.

Finding housemates. STH believes it would be beneficial to have a system where students who can't find housing or people to live with can link up with other students in the same situation. HRP agreed. PWD reported that there was a system like this last year, but the login details were not passed on. The incoming PWD should consider reviving this system.

Guarantors. DIS noted his own issues with finding guarantors and asked if there could be a fund in place for students who are not able to secure guarantors independently. PWD noted that there is a student hardship fund available from the University, and a hardship fund available from the City of York Council, but at present the University and the Union will not act as guarantors.

Council was asked to agree to the Motion.

FOR: 10

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAINING: 1

8. Consideration of *EC19 – London Rep*, submitted by the President of Wellbeing & Diversity

Motion:

That the Students' Union introduces a Part-time Officer for the London Campus

Why do I want to see this change?

Although they do not fit in as a specific liberation group as 'the London campus', these students lack specific representation. Most of these students are PG and Intl, so it could be argued they would be represented by these PTOs respectively. However, it is very hard and unfair on PTOs to feel the pressure of having to represent students they cannot physically interact with, or where they cannot put themselves in their shoes in terms of the student experience they are having. These students want to actively be a part of the Students' Union and are reaching out to us about engaging more, I feel like the first proper step would be to introduce a position of part time representative for the London Campus either in an Autumn 2020 election or February 2021 election. I want their voices to be heard.

PWD proposed the Motion.

INT agreed, noting that the current Liberation Officers and Chairs of School are not best placed to support the London Campus. There was broad support for the motion.

DIS suggested replicating the current representation system for the London Campus. PWD said that this was a possibility, but in the immediate the Campus should have at least one Officer. There was broad support for a future review of a representation system at the London Campus.

PMP noted the need for collaboration and travel between the two campuses. PSU replied that the Union and University would support this.

Council was asked to agree to the Motion.

FOR: 10

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAINING: 1

9. Consideration of *EC20 – Part-time Women's Officer*, submitted by the President of Wellbeing & Diversity

Motion:

That the Students' Union introduces a Part-time Women's Officer.

Why do I want to see this change?

YSJ is around 70% women. But even though 57% of university students in the UK are women, they are not getting to the top of their fields. Many of the women who do get these top jobs are still getting a lower pay than their male counterparts.

Trans women also face extreme discrimination, along with other issues. It is important that they feel heard and know they have support within our institution.

Period poverty is a serious issue for many women and though the university has some measures in place to help support women going through this, we can still do more to help. The role of a Woman's Officer would fit in very well with the other liberation officers, as it can support the BAME Officer when discussing issues with women of colour, the disabilities officer when discussing women with disabilities and LGBTQ+ officer when discussing trans women's issues.

Women may be a majority at YSJ but that does not cancel out the issues we face day to day.

PWD proposed the Motion.

There was broad support for the Motion.

DIS asked if the Officer should be a Gender Equalities Officer, anticipating any disagreement amongst the student body about having a Women's Officer. PWD replied that a Women's Officer is standard practice across Students' Unions. A Women's Officer would also be able to assist with the work of other Liberation Officers when issues concerning women of that liberation category arise. It is important that there is a stand-alone Women's Officer. PMP noted that men are not considered a liberation group, and that to expect the Liberation Officers to be able to work on issues concerning women devalues the specific concerns of those issues.

HRP asked what scope the Officer would have. PWD noted that the Officer would be elected on a manifesto and would create their own priorities, but that the Union would have a basic framework in the same way as the other Liberation Officers.

Council was asked to agree to the Motion.

FOR: 10

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAINING: 1

POINT OF GOVERNANCE – IMPLIMENTATION

IAA explained to Council the possibilities for implementation of EC19 and EC20. Implementation will require Byelaw amendments, which are made by Council and the Trustee Board. Council could either allow the Trustee Board to amend the Byelaws or require the Byelaws to be returned to Council in October. If the former is chosen, the new Officers could be elected in byelections in September/October. Council signified that they were happy for the Trustee Board to implement the Byelaw changes such that the Officers can be elected as soon as possible.

10. Officer Reports

ADC. ADC has received questions about the return of Library books. It was noted that books are due to be returned by 26 September 2020.

HRP. HRP has meet with the Head of School to look at how best to engage students during the COVID-19 remote learning circumstances. There has been a struggle to get Academic

Representative engagement. HRP has also met with Library staff to look at provision of materials. HRP noted that if any students have questions about resource provision, they should contact the Library staff. Library staff will be producing some FAQs.

PED. PED is meeting regularly with Registry and Heads of Schools. There are questions being dealt with about how the Library might operate in September. PED has gathered feedback from Academic Representatives, which is being analysed. PED noted that the Students' Union Award nominations are open and encouraged Councilors to nominate staff and students.

PSU – PSU is meeting regularly with senior University staff, including the Vice Chancellor. If anyone has or knows of any issues, that can email PSU at t.holmes@yorks.ac.uk so that these can be raised.

STH. STH met with academics from sport and health courses. The Safety Net Policy has not been applied to these professional courses, and work is being done to iron out any issues so that it can be implemented.

11. Any Other Business

AOB1 – Website Accessibility.

DIS raised an AOB on Union and University website accessibility. DIS noted that the websites were difficult to navigate from tablets, which are often used by people with disabilities. DIS asked if the websites could be adjusted to make access easier. SOM reported that the Union website is going through a complete redesign and will address accessibility with the Digital Development Coordinator and will raise the issue with the University.

ACTION: SOM to discuss website accessibility with the Digital Development Coordinator and the University

AOB2 – Sports & Society Committee Elections

DIS, as Chair of a Society, asked why sports and societies are being required to use the Union's platform for elections. SOM reported that the Union intends to bring all elections under the Elections Byelaw 9 and conduct them through the Union's platform. SOM recognises that there have been numerous issues implementing this. SOM reported that sports and societies will still be required to hold AGMs to review governing documents and discuss the development of the sport or society, but that elections would be held separately.

AOB3 – Trustee Recruitment

SOM reported that the Union intends to recruit two External Trustees and one Student Trustee, and the Appointments Committee will be meeting in June to interview candidates. Two Councilors still need to be appointed to the Committee, and anyone interested should contact SOM.