

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY THE 6<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2022 AT 6.00 PM  
ZOOM/WILLIAMS ROOM, MCINTYRE BUILDING

ACTION

Present : As per sederunt

Apologies : I Libelli, S Grover, A Ng, I John, J Baillie, F Kehinde, S Lombardo, L Trundle,  
T Pu, M Bah, I Zhoulikha Kassous, V Palomar Conesa

Attending: P Swinton, G Connor, G McGinn

- 1) Welcome, Apologies and Sederunt
- 2) Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of previous meeting approved.

R Väre reminded Council members that in order have their role recorded on their HEAR they must submit 4 written Council reports and attend 3 meetings during the academic year. If Council members have submitted a report they believe has not been circulated they should follow this up.

R Väre clarified that any Council member who is involved in organising a society ball should treat this work as separate to the work they undertake as a Council member. This work should not be included in Council reports and society email addresses should be used to conduct this business.

R Väre said, with regards to Council members posing questions in their reports, that if they would like these questions answered they should flag them in the Council meeting or send an email to the appropriate person.

Council members who have not already submitted a photo for the photo-wall outside the Williams Room are encouraged to do so.

R Väre thanked the Council members in attendance at the L&T Away Day on 06/12/2022 for their contributions.

- 3) Student Experience Strategy – Jonathan Jones

Jonathan Jones (Student and Academic Services) delivered a presentation on the University's ongoing work on the Student Experience Strategy. Council members were invited to ask questions and provide feedback for discussion on the strategy.

R Väre noted that the previous Council were consulted for input on the strategy. She said feedback from the current Council would be valuable now that there is an action plan and performance indicators

M Levesque asked which student campuses the strategy is designed to benefit.

J Jones said all GU campuses. He said the University's ongoing work will address how the strategy works across campuses in terms of project development.

M Levesque said the work of the strategy does not seem applicable to TNE students. She said it would be important for the University to ensure these students also benefit from the strategy.

M Levesque referenced the projects currently being undertaken. She asked why projects would be re-assigned to come under the Student Experience Strategy and whether this change would incur an administrative burden or hinder progress.

J Jones explained that existing reviews would be picked up under the work remit of the Student Experience Strategy with a view to recognising their current progress and ascertaining how work on the strategy can support them. The strategy will work as a framework for ensuring review recommendations are acted upon.

M Levesque asked, with reference to completed reviews from the last 5 years which have not yet been acted upon, if the Student Experience Strategy would merely tackle any outstanding action lists or conduct brand new reviews. She cited the International Student Review as an example.

J Jones said the International Student Review was discussed at the Student Experience Committee. He said the strategy would pick up on this review and its outstanding work. J Jones said that partnering effectively with other University/student groups would be key to the

success of the strategy, given the large amount of work and dependencies of its remit.

M Levesque asked how the strategy's Key Performance Indicators are being measured.

J Jones said the KPIs come from the Student Satisfaction Survey. The survey includes specific questions on specific services but also includes a compiled, overall support satisfaction score. It is the overall score that is used to measure the KPIs.

K Fish referenced projects which had been noted within the strategy as having SRC involvement, such as the work involving mature students and commuting students. She asked for clarity on the difference between projects noted as having SRC involvement and projects which the SRC is involved in but is not noted as such.

J Jones said, while projects do have identified leaders, there will also be opportunity for collaboration. The University and the SRC will effectively co-lead on certain projects. Each project/review can likely be shaped accordingly in terms of a working group and each one will be subject to a business case requiring an explanation of how the various involved groups will work together to deliver outcomes.

K Fish asked if there would be further opportunities for the SRC to lead on certain reviews.

J Jones said this would certainly be the case and that plans for further reviews which overlap with the work of the strategy would be finalised in due course.

E Makipere posited that the cost of UofG Sport membership may present a barrier to sport participation for some students. She asked if the strategy would look at addressing this issue.

J Jones said the team working on the strategy met with UofG Sport and GUSA last week and it was mentioned that memberships would be reviewed. J Jones said the strategy team could provide a student experience lens for these discussions and perhaps advocate for a tiered membership system, however, any decisions would ultimately be made by UofG Sport and GUSA.

M Levesque referenced the 'student-driven' aspect in the semi-circle image in J Jones's presentation and asked for greater clarity on how this relates to the Student Experience Strategy.

J Jones said he would follow up with M Levesque with clarity on this.

M Levesque asked what impact there would be on the Student Experience Strategy if the Estates Strategy was unable to meet its target outputs.

J Jones said the impact would be considerable. As such, it is critical that both strategies are worked on together. He said the recurring investment in the student experience will need to be reflective of the progress of the Estates strategy over the next 2-10-year period.

R Väre said a student shadow board for the Student Experience Strategy Group may be set up as work on the strategy progresses.

#### 4) Motion: financial support to SRC election candidates

M Mojsiej referenced the current cost-of-living crisis and the financial barriers facing students with regards to participation in various activities. He said passing this motion would work towards achieving some of the SRC's core targets, such as widening participation and improving democracy, and that it would also be in line with what other University Unions already offer. The motion now includes a spending limit which allows for budgetary decisions to be planned. M Mojsiej thanked M Levesque for her help in developing the motion.

A discussion ensued in which Council members expressed concerns regarding the motion presented, as well as support for it.

Among the concerns raised was a keenness for guidance to be distributed with the funding which would advise on appropriate spending for the elections. In addition, Council members sought clarity on where the funding would come from and expressed a keenness for controls to be implemented to limit the misuse of the fund. It was also posited that such funding could perhaps be more effectively used to support those who were already in their roles. It was also questioned whether the fund outlined in the motion would be the most effective way of widening participation, given that part-time work commitments are often a

substantial barrier to getting involved in student representation. Some Council members posited that cutting the Council social budget for this fund may, in time, negatively impact those from disadvantaged backgrounds as they may not be able to afford to partake in Council social activities. It was communicated that such a fund should be clearly signposted to students who need it, so that the fund does not get misused. A concern was also expressed that no formal consultation took place before the motion was submitted resulting in no statistical evidence to support its reasoning. It was posited that the number of uncontested positions in the Spring election may suggest that any under-representation issues on Council could be caused by a lack of student engagement with the SRC. Council members also expressed concern over the self-certification element of the proposed fund and advised that checks should be put in place to ensure awarded funding is used responsibly. A suggestion was offered that the fund could be applied for, similar to the University Hardship fund. The question of what would happen if students could not afford up-front costs prior to reimbursement was raised, as was the suggestion that the funding available across both elections be based on the number of candidates running, rather than split evenly. Council members also sought clarity on how the funding figure of £1500 was reached.

In support of the motion, Sabbatical Officers advised that any misuse of funds would be addressed at the next review cycle. It was also advised that the reason no review process would be in place for checking election-appropriate purchases would be to ensure equity for all taking part in elections. The administrative burden of such a process, as well as the task of ascertaining the criteria for election-appropriate spending, were also posited as reasons for not sense-checking funded purchases. It was posited, however, that guidance on election spending should be written prior to the next election to ensure campaigns are run in accordance with the SRC's values. It was also suggested that Council members could potentially provide extra evidence to support an election campaign purchase if said purchase could be utilised for non-Council purposes. It was outlined that the funding would come from the social part of the Council budget and that any funds for necessary Council work would be safeguarded, with any leftover funds being put back into the Council budget. Sabbatical Officers advised that Council members would need to be prepared to potentially forgo some opportunities associated with Council's social budget, however, this would be dependent on the cost of things from year-to-year and what funds would be available.

Council members reiterated that the purpose of motion is to reduce financial barriers to representation and ensure that students from all backgrounds can become involved in the SRC. It was also noted that financial support is already in place for travel expenses for work at the Dumfries campus. Widening participation was presented as a target which can be achieved in multiple ways, with this motion being one tangible measure that can be taken in this direction. Other barriers to participation, such as the time commitment imposed by Council members' part-time work, were highlighted as things which could be addressed within Council's structure. A discretionary fund to financially help those who cannot afford to partake in Council social activity was also presented as an option. It was posited that motions do not require a prior formal consultation and that the reasoning behind this motion is based on personal experience, anecdotal evidence, and the current cost-of-living crisis. Sabbatical Officers also opined that those running uncontested could exercise judgement on whether to apply for funding or not. They also noted the value of running a campaign, regardless of contest, for engaging with students and raising the profile of the SRC. It was also noted that all receipts for funding would be submitted to the SRC Finance Team and scrutinised as standard procedure before any payment was made. Council members unable to make up-front purchases for their campaigns would be encouraged to approach the finance team and discuss their situation.

M Levesque confirmed that the proposed £1500 funding amount was calculated from the anticipation that there may be 10 students running for Sabbatical positions one year, with an expectation that half may come forward for funding. This was sense-checked with several different groups and students and the funding figure arrived at was £1500. The reason it was agreed to be split evenly across elections is due to the fact there is not currently significant data informing how the split should be done. If in future years it looks like it should be split up differently between the two terms then this can be explored, however M Levesque posited that, because there is a larger spend on Sabbatical campaigns in the Spring election and more candidates in the Autumn election, it seems sensible to split it evenly. The maximum amount of funding available will be the agreed spending limit, and the minimum will be the fund amount divided by the number of members with a proportional amount given to what kind of campaign a candidate is running.

G Connor said the funding amount and split would be tested at the Spring Election and reviewed at this point. Then, at the last meeting of Council, it would be reviewed again and Council members could set a new budget for the next two elections. This puts it in line with the SRC's year budget which runs July -June.

A vote was taken via Mentimeter in the knowledge that another discussion would take place to confirm spending limits if the motion passed.

The motion was passed with 13 votes in support and 12 votes against.

R Väre said the current election spending limits in place are £100 for a Sabbatical Officer position and £30 for a non-Sabbatical position.

M Levesque proposed that spending limits be changed to £75 for a Sabbatical Officer position and £25 for a non-Sabbatical position, reasoning that the lower amount makes campaigning more accessible, with the reduction also not being significant enough to limit campaigning potential. She said this could be reviewed in the last Council meeting.

A discussion ensued in which Council members expressed their opinions on suitable election campaign spending limits. T Anderson suggested that the amount for Sabbatical positions be changed to £100, given the previous amount was £200. Council members broadly supported T Anderson's suggestion, however, further reductions in the future were encouraged if viable. The reduction of spending was seen as something that would align with the SRC's environmental goals and address the cost-of-living crisis, however, the importance of on-campus campaigning for student engagement reasons was also asserted. Lowering the spending limit was also seen as beneficial for students being able to receive the maximum amount of funding available. Council members broadly supported the notion that it should be made clear to students in election-related messaging that the spending guidelines are limits and not targets, and that money should only be spent on campaigning if necessary. Some Council members expressed concern over reducing spending limits at a time of rising inflation, positing that this could limit candidates on what they could do in their campaigns.

Council members voted via Mentimeter on whether to change the current spending limits for election campaigns. It was agreed that the

spending limits be set at £100 for a Sabbatical Officer position and £25 for non-Sabbatical position.

R Väre noted that, prior to the next Autumn elections, the Sabbatical Officers in position may choose to implement changes to election campaign spending limits.

5) Reflection on First Semester

- Reflection on first Semester
- Highlights for Council to Consider

6) Council Reports

a) SRC President: Rinna Väre

R Väre provided an update on the University's ongoing student accommodation issues. There are currently 10 students in University-provided hotels and the University is aware of 64 students in self-sourced temporary accommodation. 48 students are in short term University accommodation (serviced apartments). From the pool of students who approached the University in need of accommodation, 136 have now found long-term accommodation/are no longer in need of University accommodation support. The total number of students who have come forward looking for emergency accommodation (including those who approached The Advice Centre) is 256, however R Väre noted that the number of those requiring accommodation in reality is likely higher than this. If Council members are aware of any students struggling with accommodation they should direct them to TAC. There will be 400 beds available in halls in semester 2. These will be available to students currently in University-provided short-term accommodation, those in hotels and incoming PGT/Erasmus/Study Abroad/Exchange students.

The SRC (and TAC) has also provided feedback on the University's new accommodation guarantee policy for the next academic year. The SRC is still seeking clarity on what is defined by a 'commutable distance' from the University. It has also asked the University for clear and timely communications to be sent to students (particularly PG students) so that they can make informed decisions on accommodation. The SRC has asked to see the guarantee again before it is publicised and to also be



part of discussions on which student groups will be prioritised in the event of another accommodation shortage next year. The number of beds available next year will be 5,692 – over 1,300 more than the current academic year. The hope is this will be sufficient for next year.

R Väre and T Frater attended a meeting of the University Court on 23/11/2022. They presented on the SRC's Cap Student Numbers campaign and received engaged feedback from academic staff members.

The University has shared its response to the Cap Student Numbers campaign with its media contacts and the SRC, however, the response will not be shared publicly until after the SRC meets with SMG members next week, wherein the SRC can discuss its feedback. The hope is the SRC's feedback can be incorporated into the University's response.

The Morag Ross KC Gender Based Violence report is due to be sent to Senate next week and published publicly shortly thereafter. Council members who wish to do so are encouraged to read the report summary, recommendations, and action plan. The SRC is referenced frequently in the report's recommendations and action plan and will be working closely with the University to address these points. There will be an Action Plan Implementation group established next semester involving the SRC President, David Duncan, Christine Barr, Sara Carter and Martin Hendry. This work will also be overseen by an external adviser and will be supported by the University's relevant student support services and existing staff members. This group will report to the Principal, SMG, the Student Experience Committee and other relevant University Committees. R Väre will share updates with Council as work progresses. The University has identified 16 actions from the recommendations, with the aim that each will be met by the end of August 2023. Actions range from wording changes on the University website to structural changes and the development of new resources. The SRC will discuss internally how it can work effectively to achieve the goals of the report. One recommendation addresses the provision of more resources for TAC and how to make its work as effective as possible in this regard.

b) VP Education: Micaela Levesque

Nominations for the 2023 Student Teaching Awards are now open.

Gary Stephen from University Security has confirmed there will be full SafeZone access as well as a secondary manager for the Security team at the SEC during the exam period.

Karen Lee will attend a meeting of the SRC Academic Forum to hold a consultation on teaching and timetabling in the 2023/24 academic year.

A new consultation group with the University's Digital Development Team is currently in progress. Council members are encouraged to attend a workshop being held on 12/12/2022 regarding the UofG Life app.

The Academic Policy and Governance Office has agreed to host a conference addressing issues with the Good Cause system. The hope is this will be held in semester 2 prior to the exam diet.

R Väre encouraged Council members to submit nominations for the STAs.

c) VP Student Activities: Katie Fish

K Fish attended the UCU strike action with Council members.

The SRC's Winter De-stress Campaign is ongoing. Its Paws for Stress event was held on 05/12/2022 and was a success.

The University's Movember campaign was a success, with over £21k raised across the University. RAG raised over £500 - more than the previous year's total.

The SRC's review of provisions for clubs and societies which has investigated the lack of space on campus for clubs, the need for storage facilities and clubs' use of Timetabling Services has now been submitted to senior University staff. The SRC is awaiting the University's response here.

A trip to the Edinburgh Christmas market is currently being planned.

d) VP Student Support: Hailie Pentleton

Disability History Month events are ongoing. A panel event entitled 'Disabling the Narrative' will be held on 12/12/2022. Council members are encouraged to attend.

H Pentleton raised the proposal of a free breakfast scheme at the University with Robert Partridge and Robert Garnish. This will be discussed with the Cost-of-Living Action Group with the hope that such a scheme will be implemented in semester 2.

e) PG Arts Convenor: Alex Symington

A Symington noted a correction to his Council report regarding meeting dates.

f) PG MVLS Convenor: Ebrahim Makhoul

g) UG Social Sciences Convenor: Ross Whip

h) Engineering School Rep: Hugh Southall

i) Humanities School Rep: Emma Murray

j) Life Sciences School Rep: Denver Correia

D Correia noted the change in his position from Life Sciences School Representative to Life Sciences Portfolio Representative due to academic restructuring. He said he and M Levesque are currently discussing strategies for student representation for the 5 new Schools within MVLS. He said any suggestions on effective representation strategies from Council members would be welcomed.

D Correia said the Life Sciences Christmas Ball was a great success and he thanked all those involved in its organisation.

D Correia is in the process of collating Class Representative feedback. He said this has mostly been positive with Class Reps indicating they feel supported by the SRC.

M Levesque said the SRC Executive team are currently discussing the logistics of the MVLS restructuring with regards to its elections. Discussions with the College are also taking place on how it views student representation. An update will be provided to Council members in due course.

M Mojsiej asked if the number of students D Correia represents is changing.

Denver Correia said he will represent the same number of students but these students will be divided differently across the 5 new Schools.

M Perras said a new Interim Head of Year is now in place within MVLS due to the previous Head of Year resigning. M Perras and P Su are currently in the process of trying to set up a meeting with the new Head. Both representatives also distributed a survey on student mental health and discrimination in the Medical School. M Perras said the survey has produced some very concerning results. She said the plan is to bring these results to Council for input from members and the Mental Health Equality Representative. The survey results will also be sent to the Head of MVLS. M Perras noted that she and P Su are also part of a project to stamp out discrimination within the Medical School.

T Anderson said he is arranging a meeting with P Su, M Perras and T Frater to discuss the mental health of students in the college of MVLS. This will take place before the festive break.

M Levesque said the College of Social Sciences is currently undertaking a large data collection project around assessment and feedback. R Whip is involved in this project, as are Council academic representatives. M Levesque requested that any results of data collection projects be sent to her.

H Pentleton said Council members working on data collection, student support and/or student mental health projects should keep her informed so that these can be progressed on a University level.

R Väre said if any Council member is dealing with a difficult project and requires support, they should contact their line manager or a member of SRC staff.

- k) Mathematics and Statistics School Rep: Jordan Baillie
- l) Medicine School Rep: Mara Perras
- m) Modern Languages and Culture School Rep: Sara Lombardo
- n) Physics & Astronomy School Rep: Heri Busquier Cerdan
- o) Psychology & Neuroscience School Rep: Natalie van Rooyen
- p) Social and Political Sciences School Rep: Irene Libelli

- q) Charities Officer: Lewis Trundle
- r) Environmental Officer: Erika Makipere
- s) Gender Equality Officer: Valeria Palomar Conesa
- t) LGBTQ+ Officer: Pablo Moran Ruiz
- u) Mental Health Equality Officer: Tony Anderson

T Anderson said, as a CIVIS Representative, he has experienced issues receiving the timings for the CIVIS meetings. He asked if the CIVIS Teams channel could be used and timings posted in it.

R Väre said she will raise this with the CIVIS leaders. She said that any attendee who has the meeting link should post this in the Teams channel.

- v) Race Equality Officer: Omar Saleh
- w) General Rep: Theo Frater
- x) First Year Rep: Abheer Kukreja

## 7. AOCB

- Academic Forum Notes – Micaela Levesque
- Welfare Forum Notes – Hailie Pentleton

T Anderson said he was recently treated in a discourteous manner by another Council member while representing the SRC.

R Väre emphasised the importance of Council members being mindful of behaving courteously in professional environments.

K Fish said the SRC has a complaints procedure in place if Council members feel they require it.

D Correia asked if the extra study spaces being provided by the University could be more effectively signposted.

R Väre said the SRC can contact the University Communications team and ask if there is capacity for the SRC to advertise study spaces for the winter exam diet. She said the SRC has also been in touch with Information Services about better advertising of study spaces and incorporating smaller study spaces into the University app.

D Correia asked if there will be study spaces available for PG students sitting exams in January.

R Väre said it would be difficult for the SRC to offer extra study space to students in January but it can advertise other study spaces available. She said she would assume that the University will not make extra study spaces available in January due to teaching.

T Anderson said PG students who are over 21 at the beginning of their course are permitted access to the MSA building.

R Väre thanked Council members for their work during semester 1 and wished all members a happy and restful festive break.

8. Date of next meeting – Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2022