

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON THURSDAY THE 16<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023 AT 6.00 PM  
ROOM 201, MCINTYRE BUILDING/ZOOM

ACTION

Present : As per sederunt

Apologies : S Grover, E Murray, M Bah, G Connor, A Symington

Attending: P Swinton, B Hay, S Cairns

- 1) Welcome, Apologies and Sederunt
- 2) MyCampus New User Interface Demonstration – Karen Tallett

Karen Tallett and Christopher Ellis presented a demonstration of the MyCampus New User Interface.

R Whip asked when the second phase of the project would be rolled out.

K Tallett said phase one is expected to be completed within the next few weeks. The hope is that phase 2 (the registration and enrolment piece of the project) would be completed in time for the registration and enrolment period next year.

H Southall asked if the interface icons have been finalised.

K Tallett said the current icons have been finalised, however, feedback on enhancing these for future phases would be taken on board.

C Ellis said Council would be consulted for feedback on the design for phase 2.

H Pentleton-Owens asked if the accessibility options under 'additional preferences' will be clearly signposted to students using the interface.

C Ellis said user guidance would be provided for this

K Tallett said there will also be help videos for navigating the interface and these will be included in the University's student newsletter. Guidance on accessibility options will be highlighted.

K Fish asked if students will be able to increase text size on the interface.

K Tallett said this could be explored for a future phase but students can increase text size via their browser settings at present. The text size on the enrolment page is planned to be enlarged for ease of use before the next enrolment period.

E Makipere asked if 'preferred name' updates would carry forward to a student's Moodle and email accounts.

K Tallett said this would only change on MyCampus, however, this feedback could be considered.

M Levesque said other University teams have been discussing pulling data from MyCampus on preferred names.

C Ellis said work has been carried out on preferred names over the last 2 years regarding linking these with student email accounts. He said the interfaces are in place but an agreement would need to be reached on what changes are to be made and when.

A Ng asked, in terms of the user interface, if the team considered using icons, symbols, fonts and buttons that are more commonly used on common mobile apps.

K Tallett said the text, fonts and icons used are standard for the University. She said, during phase 2, a review of these could take place and there would be opportunities for student feedback to change and shape these.

A Ng said, regarding accessibility, one current issue with the present webpage/Moodle is that the icons and buttons are often too colourful. She said this seems to have been brought over to the icons of the new page. She asked if there has been consideration of a minimalist icon option for those who require it.

Karen Tallett said there is no way to change what is there on the interface already. She said the interface went through accessibility testing so should meet accessibility requirements. She said if students are experiencing issues with this then feedback would be welcome.

A Ng asked if, in designing the website, the student portal of other universities (UK and international) been studied?

K Tallett said the website the University uses for MyCampus is used internationally and by universities across the UK. She said feedback on the site is regularly shared between universities with a view to enhancing the student user experience.

C Ellis asked if he could be sent a copy of A Ng's questions.

R Väre thanked K Tallett and C Ellis for their presentation and commended the work undertaken on the new MyCampus interface. She said she hopes the changes to the enrolment process will be implemented as students provide feedback on this every year.

K Tallett said any further questions or feedback could be sent to herself or C Ellis. She said student input would be welcome for future phases of the project and that students would be welcome to take part in testing pools.

### 3) Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of previous meeting approved.

R Väre said the Sabbatical Officers are not aware of any issues concerning students not being able to vote for candidates within their College. Any Council members aware of such issues should contact the Sabbatical Officers.

The University has a webpage which outlines the support available for Ukrainian students affected by the war in Ukraine. There has also been a moratorium on debt-chasing for Russian students. The University is providing help to Russian students on immigration matters and has sent out communications regarding the support available. Council members aware of any concerns should contact the Sabbatical Officers.

H Pentleton-Owens said a meeting is being set up between herself, K Fish and E Makipere to discuss taking forward Student Sustainability assemblies in the next academic year.

M Mojsiej asked why the student sustainability assemblies did not take place last semester as originally planned.

H Pentleton-Owens said, while the project began last year and assemblies were planned to begin in semester 1, the current Sabbatical team did not receive a clear handover on the project and were unable to begin the project as planned. H Pentleton-Owens said the Sabbatical Officers are keen for the project to be undertaken in the next academic year.

R Väre said Council members interested in laying the groundwork for this project would be welcome to join H Pentleton-Owens' upcoming meeting.

R Väre said there was no update to provide on the implementation of a PGR Rep position on the MyClassRep system, however, this would be followed up with the University.

#### 4) Elections Report – Rinna Väre

R Väre said the 2023 Spring Election was successful overall. Nominations were up from last year, with 52 successful nominations this year and 23 last year. New Council positions were filled and most Welfare positions were contested. The hope is the Home Students Officer position will be filled in the Autumn election. A small number of School Representative positions remain unfilled so further promotion of these posts will be considered in the future.

The revised Hustings format was well-received and gained positive feedback. R Väre said there is room for consideration of the question limits for contested candidates in the future. Hustings attendance was down slightly from last year despite increased measures to promote engagement. R Väre said these measures should be implemented again in future elections, as well as consideration of any further improvements to the Hustings format.

The number of votes cast was greater than last year's Spring Election. The SRC will continue to engage with the University's Communications Team to promote its elections. The results celebration was bigger in scope than last year's and R Väre encouraged further development of this event for future elections.

Additional measures for promoting election engagement included having Domino's distribute free pizza on campus; additional Instagram promotion for non-Sabbatical posts and an increased number of promotional reels and Tik Tok videos. R Väre thanked S Cairns and J Small for their work on the social media promotion of the election. She added that GUST filmed election content this year.

R Whip asked if the overall number of votes was being measured based on the overall number of votes cast or the number of students voting.

R Väre said it was based on the number of students voting.

R Whip asked if there was a possibility the increased number of votes being cast was due to the increased number of positions and not necessarily indicative of an increased voter turnout overall.

R Väre said there has been a general trend of declining engagement with student elections across student unions in Scotland over the past few years. She said the SRC will continue to take additional measures to promote engagement with elections. She said engagement tends to increase when there are a greater number of Sabbatical Officer candidates so these positions could possibly be promoted further in the future.

M Levesque said the fact that more positions are now filled will increase the number of students voting, as there are now more students eligible to vote for their own School's candidates. She said this will, in turn, increase the reach of the elections.

Heri Busquier Cerdan asked if the election turnout determines the SRC's yearly funding.

R Väre said when the SRC applies for its funding, it presents figures on multiple activities, including its elections, campaigns, and Sabbatical Officer and Class Representative activity.

T Anderson asked how many Council members applied for funding for their election campaigns.

R Väre said she believed just under 50 candidates (out of 52) initially asked to be considered for funding.

R Whip asked if the campaign fund was widely advertised. He said that the SRC should consider asking candidates if they would like to be considered for funding after they know if they are contested or not, so that candidates can make an informed decision on whether to apply.

R Väre said the fund was advertised on social media and all candidates were made aware of it. She acknowledged R Whip's second point and said the SRC should try to make the campaign-funding process as effective as possible.

T Anderson posited that the Sabbatical hustings being held on the same day as GUSA's may have resulted in decreased student engagement.

R Väre said the date of the Sabbatical hustings was chosen to allow enough time to process the questions for the non-Sabbatical candidates, while still allowing enough time for both types of candidates to receive their questions in advance. She said she did not believe engagement suffered significantly as a result but said alternative dates could be considered in future elections.

T Frater suggested including a small section in the report explaining how the campaign funding worked during the election.

R Väre said further information on this could be provided. She said the number of candidates who took up funding could be provided at a later date and an update on how much was spent on funding could be provided at the next Council meeting.

R Whip said he felt there was limited time for candidates to campaign before the elections in comparison to the Unions' candidates and that this was responsible for a lack of engagement with the SRC's election. He asked if there could possibly be an increased amount of time for candidates to campaign online in the next election.

R Väre said she did not believe the Unions' elections experienced significantly stronger engagement than the SRC's, however, extra campaigning time could be considered. She said campaigning was restricted to after the Candidates' Meeting to avoid the confusion over election guidelines which arose in previous elections. She said two days of campaigning was also decided on in the interests of fairness to all

candidates, some of whom would not be able to run longer campaigns due to pre-existing time commitments.

H Busquier Cerdan said he is aware that one candidate who was elected is graduating this year so will not be in post for a full academic year. He asked if there was a way to prevent this from happening again.

R Väre said as the candidate in question has already been elected, it has been decided that they will remain in post until November, at which point another representative elected in the Autumn Election will take over. She said greater clarity on role lengths will be communicated to candidates in the future.

R Väre said the feedback received would be useful for the planning stages of the elections next year.

#### 5) Anti-racism campaign update – Hailie Pentleton-Owens

H Pentleton-Owens and O Saleh met with Carol Young from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) and have now confirmed consultancy funding with Glasgow City Council. This funding will allow the SRC to work with CRER on the development of an anti-racism workshop. H Pentleton-Owens and O Saleh will be holding consultations with students (especially those from specific community societies) to garner their feedback on how the training should look, as well as feedback on the University's own anti-racism campaign and student experiences on campus. A small working group is also being set up to develop the materials for this work and an update on this will be provided in due course.

#### 6) Council Reports

##### a) SRC President: Rinna Väre

A new project board has recently been formed to look at the future development of study spaces in the Library, JMS Building, Round Reading Room and Fraser building. Consultations will likely take place in due course and student feedback is welcome. Council members with feedback to pass on should contact R Väre.

With regards to the SRC's work to address the cost-of-living crisis, Catering have confirmed they will be introducing a £1.50 budget soup deal at the JMS from 20/03/2022. The SRC has communicated concerns over the small portion size, however, as well as the value for students. A recommendation from the Cost-of-Living Action Group last semester was the implementation of a budget food option across campus food outlets so the Sabbatical Officers have followed up on this and are awaiting an update.

R Väre said the progress of the Cost-of-Living Action Group has been disappointing and actions have not been carried out. She said the group is currently being discussed with David Duncan and Robert Partridge and will likely undergo revised membership. An update will be provided in due course.

The University has now confirmed it will be increasing the rental costs of its accommodation by 9.5% next year. Discussions have not yet taken place on what financial support will be available for students and the SRC is keen to ascertain what additional support measures will be implemented to help students who are struggling financially.

The SRC has concerns regarding the capacities of the University's Student Conduct teams. The University has said recent staff appointments will help ease their workload, however, the SRC remains mindful of the pressures that the upcoming exam diet will place on these teams and hopes to ensure they have adequate resources to operate effectively.

R Väre and R Whip visited the University's Dumfries Campus on 13/03/2023 alongside the Rector. They met with the Head of Professional Services, Head of School, and CUCSA Events & Marketing Assistant, Malcolm Wearing. The lack of student society and career support opportunities for students at this campus was discussed. The SRC will reach out to provide support to a student who wishes to establish a student society there.

O Saleh asked if the Wolfson Library could be opened to all students during the exam revision period.

R Väre said this has not been explored before but could be considered. She said the specific needs of students within MVLS would need to be



taken into account if this was to be explored. R Väre said 24hr Library access could be explored for future exam diets if students feel this would be beneficial.

T Anderson asked what impact the 9.5% rent increase would have on students in University accommodation. He asked if research could be carried out on this prior to the increase taking effect.

R Väre said she was unsure what research could be carried out but said the SRC anticipates the increase will impact students financially, with possible outcomes including a need to take on extra part-time work. She said this could impact students' studies, mental health and general wellbeing. The increase could also result in students opting for cheaper accommodation further away from campus.

H Pentleton-Owens said, at the Student Experience Committee, the SRC asked the University to provide figures for any surplus gained over the last 2 years from student rental income. The SRC will scrutinise these figures to ascertain if the University can justify the rent increase or if there are grounds for the SRC to campaign against it.

T Anderson asked if the University has clarified why it refused a free GBV worker offered by an external charity.

R Väre said Mhairi Taylor from the Equality & Diversity Unit has issued a response to the student societies who approached the University on behalf of Rape Crisis.

B Hay clarified that the University did not refuse a free GBV worker. The costs they (and the SRC) were quoted by the external charity were not deemed justifiable. As such, the joint recruitment of a University/SRC staff member was opted for instead.

b) VP Education: Micaela Levesque

Preparations for the 2023 Student Teaching Awards are underway. M Levesque thanked the Committee members for helping with the selection process of nominees and winners and said the choices have already received very positive feedback.

The Class Rep Conference took place on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. There were 91 ticket registrations with an average of 20 per session and a maximum of 11 attendees at one session. This constituted a higher attendance than in previous years. M Levesque thanked the Council members who attended. A report will be written about general attendance and the impact of in-person events and this will include a recommendation for more Class Rep development events throughout the year.

The Student Voice Working Group has finished collecting the results of a questionnaire from Schools regarding their practices for EvaSys course evaluations and SSLC meetings. Each School is currently being analysed so an overall report will be written by the end of the year. The initial summary has been sent to LTC for discussion next week and includes concerning statistics such as the fact the MyClassReps system was only mentioned once out of 152 responses. M Levesque said this suggests changes to policy are required. P Moran Ruiz is also working on this project and M Levesque said Council members will be contacted to provide feedback for the project in due course.

c) VP Student Support: Hailie Pentleton-Owens

H Pentleton-Owens said concerns were raised at the Disability Equality Group regarding Estates. She said Estates have not been attending the Disability Equality Group meetings properly and many accessibility-related matters have not been addressed for years. As such, the Head of HR raised these issues at the Equality and Diversity Subcommittee and a working group has now been established to deal with accessibility concerns and issues regarding Estates. H Pentleton-Owens will have sight of this group and Estates have been asked to submit a report to the group on their progress prior to the next meeting.

H Pentleton-Owens thanked T Anderson, P Moran Ruiz, R Whip and K Fish for attending her meeting with Andrew West. A West is conducting an external review of the University's support services and will be delivering a report in the coming weeks with recommendations on how these services can be improved. Council members are encouraged to engage with the report to inform future campaign work.

H Pentleton-Owens and Jamie Small are part of a University sub-group which is working on the campaign and communications work surrounding the recommendations in Morag Ross's GBV report. A

student consultation on how this work can be progressed will take place via the Welfare Forum and will involve representatives from student bodies and clubs and societies.

d) VP Student Activities: Katie Fish

The 2023 VCS Awards took place on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2023. The event was a success with strong engagement from many SRC-affiliated clubs and societies.

K Fish attended the GCC Housing Strategy Community Councillors' Consultation. She raised concerns over the lack of student consultation from GCC. As a result, the Sabbatical Officers hope to meet with GCC in the coming weeks. K Fish will circulate an online form which Council members can use to provide feedback to inform discussions with GCC.

R Väre thanked K Fish and the Council members involved in the successful organisation and delivery of the VCS Awards.

- e) PG Arts Convenor: Alex Symington
- f) Business School Rep: Sahej Grover
- g) Chemistry School Rep: Arnav Saxena
- h) Computing School Rep: Angela Ng
- i) Engineering School Rep: Hugh Southall
- j) Humanities School Rep: Emma Murray
- k) Law School Rep: Isabelle John
- l) Life Sciences School Rep: Denver Correia
- m) Mathematics and Statistics School Rep: Jordan Baillie
- n) Modern Languages and Culture School Rep: Sara Lombardo
- o) Physics & Astronomy School Rep: Heri Busquier Cerdan
- p) Psychology & Neuroscience School Rep: Natalie van Rooyen
- q) Social and Political Sciences School Rep: Irene Libelli

I Libelli presented her report on the comprehensive review of the School of Social and Political Sciences at L&T and to the Head of L&T. She said this went very well, with School staff being responsive to working with other areas of the University to address issues such as student numbers and mental health. She said staff were also keen to work with the SRC to improve student engagement. I Libelli thanked M Levesque for her help and advised Council members undertaking similar School reviews to contact her for advice and feedback.

R Väre thanked I Libelli for all her work on the review.

- r) Charities Officer: Lewis Trundle
- s) LGBTQ+ Officer: Pablo Moran Ruiz
- t) Mental Health Equality Officer: Tony Anderson

T Anderson said the launch of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Care Day was a success. As part of the event, the SRC's recently passed motion to recognise Care Experience as a protected characteristic was promoted online. Strathclyde University have also contacted T Anderson regarding undertaking their own policy work on Care Experience.

- u) Race Equality Officer: Omar Saleh

O Saleh is currently working on decolonising the curriculum with the Decolonisation of the Curriculum Community Practice Group. The group is focusing its efforts on STEM and Social Science subjects. If any Social Sciences or STEM representatives are interested in helping to plan a summer student conference for this or advertising it to Class Reps they should contact O Saleh.

- v) General Rep: Theo Frater
- w) First Year Rep: Abheer Kukreja

#### 7. AOCB – Council Social

R Väre said Council members should use their final Council report to reflect on the meetings they attended and work they undertook throughout the year. She said this will also be informative and useful for other Council members. She said Council members would soon be contacted regarding their handovers and that they should think about these when writing their final reports.

Heri Busquier Cerdan presented his Motion to Reject the Illegal Migration Bill. He said the UK Government's bill purports to stop people crossing the Channel in boats but will actually stop people from seeking refugee status and asylum in general. Students for Choice and Student Action for Refugees have expressed interest in working with the SRC on the motion's aims.

M Mojsiej asked what the next steps would be if the motion was passed.

H Busquier Cerdan said a Refugee Working Group could possibly be established to promote campaigns which protest the narrative of the

criminalisation of refugees. He said speaking with the interested societies to see what they are doing to currently support refugees (financially or otherwise) and amplifying their voices would be a positive first step. He added that, if any Council members have ideas on how to progress the aims of the motion then they could be supported too.

R Väre said the SRC must be careful not to make statements if meaningful action cannot also be taken. She said it would be good to consider if there is any current student-led work that the SRC can support or amplify, considering it may not be able to dedicate substantial resources of its own to this campaign.

M Perras asked what the overall aim of the motion is.

H Busquier Cerdan said he initially thought the SRC could work with the University and Glasgow-based NGOs who undertake work to support refugees, however he said the University is hesitant to take political stances. He asked R Väre if the SRC could work with NGOs.

R Väre said this could be explored, however, it would be more effective for the SRC to work with student-led organisations and the University on issues which students with refugee/asylum seeker backgrounds face. She said the SRC needs to consider the resources available to support this work and that its primary focus is to support students.

K Fish suggested a meeting could be set up between the motion's proposers, involved societies and External Relations to discuss the University's commitment to supporting student refugees.

H Busquier Cerdan said NGOs such as Amnesty International have student societies at the University and that STAR is a UK-wide network. He said, as such, they will have reach beyond the University. He said there is also a team at the University who supports refugees as well as a University Refugee Champion.

R Väre said the latter falls under the University's 'University of Sanctuary' work and External Relations Head Rachel Sandison is the University's Champion.

I Zhoulikha Kassous said a group within the University called UNESCO RILA is carrying out research around refugees and that they could be approached for help with this campaign.

R Väre said if the motion passes then an action point for the next meeting could be for the SRC to explore how this work can be taken forward.

O Saleh said the bill is racist as it disproportionately affects countries whose populations are predominantly people of colour. He said voting in support of the motion shows that the SRC is actively taking a stance against the bill.

T Anderson asked if any conflict could arise from the SRC voting to support the motion.

R Väre said she does not believe it is a highly controversial issue within the University community.

The motion passed with 17 votes in support, 4 votes against and 2 spoiled votes.

R Väre said the Sabbatical Officers can set up an initial meeting with the motion's proposers to discuss the best course of action going forward. An update will be provided at the next meeting. ACTION

The Sabbatical Officers are considering planning a Council social event prior to the last Council meeting. K Fish proposed the date of Tuesday April 11<sup>th</sup>. Council members with ideas for the social should contact the Sabbatical Officers. The budget for the event still needs to be discussed with SRC management. Council members who would propose alternative dates should contact the Sabbatical Officers.

M Levesque said Council members on the Critical Friends list for the QESR review should have received an invitation from Chris Buckland to attend the full-day session and pre-session. M Levesque said she requires 5 responses from Council members regarding this by 3pm tomorrow.

11. Date of next meeting – 20/04/2023 (TBC)