

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON THURSDAY THE 16<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023 AT 6.30 PM  
ROOM 201, MCINTYRE BUILDING/ZOOM

ACTION

Present : As per sederunt

Apologies : E Murray, V Palomar Conesa, I Libelli, S Lombardo, I Zhoulikha Kassous, S Grover, A Kukreja, N van Rooyen

Attending: P Swinton, G Connor, J Small

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1) Welcome, Apologies and Sederunt

R Väre said the SRC's thoughts are with all those affected by the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

2) Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of January Council meeting approved.

Minutes of Emergency Council meeting approved with the addition of a note on the voting discrepancies which took place in relation to the Council Restructure Motion. Said addition requested by T Anderson.

R Väre said the Sabbatical Officers are in contact with the University's IT team regarding the implementation of a PGR Convenor position on MyClassReps. Discussions are ongoing and an update will be provided in due course.

M Levesque said there was a University-wide email sent out regarding the impact of UCU industrial action on students. The University was not willing to send this email out in different languages, reasoning that, as all teaching is conducted in English, all related communications should be in English. The complex nature of the information for non-native speakers was, however, raised with the University. Any School-specific issues should be brought to M Levesque. Martin Hendry (Clerk of Senate) has agreed to mediate any discussions between Schools and the SRC if necessary.

R Väre proposed amending the current Council action list to remove the ongoing/open action section, reasoning that many of the items on this list are not easily actionable. She said she would provide an update on each item. Council agreed to remove this section and incorporate actions into the general action list as appropriate. Council members were made aware that should they have any concerns regarding the actions in the ongoing list they are welcome to contact the Sabbatical Officers or raise these in Council meetings.

R Väre provided an update on each of the items in the ongoing action list.

R Väre said the SRC has been working with the University to ensure appropriate support and information is given to students in non-University and newly secured accommodation. Students received information from the SRC on this during Welcome Week. They also received all general SRC and University communications. The SRC will push for the University to provide this support to students again next year.

R Väre said the SRC will continue to vocally support those affected by any conflicts/humanitarian crises which may arise in the future.

R Väre was recently in contact with a student group who are campaigning for the University to divest from the arms trade. The SRC is currently looking into how it can support the group with their campaign.

R Väre said the Sabbatical Officers will investigate the support currently available for Ukrainian and Russian students at the University. An update will be provided at the next Council meeting.

R Väre said the SRC is undertaking ongoing work to support students through the cost-of-living crisis. The Sabbatical Officers are due to meet with Commercial Services soon to discuss the price of food on campus. An update will be provided in due course. The SRC has also sent an open letter to the Principal regarding the proposed rent increases for University accommodation, highlighting the fact there is no clear governance process for this decision and no student consultation took place prior to the decision being made. The SRC has asked for a working group to be established for this process involving student representatives from the SRC.

The SRC has raised the impact of the rising cost of living in the University's Cost of Living Action Group. It has also liaised with External Relations regarding scholarship provisions and emphasised the need for increased provisions, particularly for students from widening participation backgrounds. The Sabbatical Officers have also communicated to the University that if rent prices are increased then it must provide greater financial support to students.

The SRC has raised, with the University, the detrimental impact of full-time work on student learning. This has been discussed in groups such as the Transitions Working Group and closely aligns with the pressures placed on students due to the cost-of-living crisis.

With regards to an action against H Pentleton to consider running peoples' sustainability assemblies, R Väre suggested this be taken forward by H Pentleton, K Fish and E Makipere and an update provided at the next Council meeting.

R Väre said the SRC will continue to advocate for funding for student bodies.

### 3) January Welcome – Katie Fish

The SRC's January Welcome took place between January 8<sup>th</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. A large variety of events were held which experienced strong levels of student engagement. Events included mixers, a ceilidh, a quiz, and craft-based activities. K Fish thanked all those involved in the organisation and delivery of the January Welcome.

### 4) Home Student's Day Report – Katie Fish

Home Students' Day took place on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The day was held to help foster a sense of community among home students and was a success, with a variety of events held and 50-60 students attending. The day also saw the launch of the Home Students' Society.

R Whip thanked K Fish and T Frater for all their work supporting home students.

R Väre expressed thanks to K Fish for organising January Welcome. She also thanked K Fish and T Frater for organising Home Students' Day and establishing the Home Students' Society.

#### 5) Update on Anti-Racism Campaign

H Pentleton and other SRC Welfare Officers will soon meet with the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) to discuss the SRC's Anti-Racism Campaign. The hope is that student consultations will take place in the coming months. The SRC has also secured funding from Glasgow City Council for CRER to conduct anti-racism consultation work. Updates on the campaign will be provided in due course.

H Southall asked if the funding referenced will still be available given the recently announced GCC budget cuts.

R Väre confirmed the funding will still be available and said the announced cuts apply to next year's budget.

#### 6) Action on Council Review/Feedback

M Levesque said an action list has been created from the feedback received from Council members on the Council Representative experience. The Sabbatical Officers have met with SRC staff to discuss changes to the electoral hustings format as well as improvements to accessibility for the Spring election. Included in the action list is a draft table of contents for a proposed Council handbook, designed to address the lack of information/structure some representatives felt at the beginning of their roles. Council members will likely be sent the action list after the end of the academic term and feedback on the proposed Council handbook is welcome.

#### 7) New Hustings Format

Based on feedback received from Council members, the SRC Sabbatical team met with members of the SRC's permanent staff to discuss how its election hustings can be made a more accessible and enjoyable experience for candidates and a more engaging experience for viewers/voters.

R Väre explained the proposed changes to hustings for sabbatical and non-sabbatical positions, as outlined in forthcoming communications for candidates.

T Anderson said he was concerned that the new hustings time limits are different from those detailed in the election regulations document which all candidates were required to read. He asked if changes could be made to election regulations after they have been sent out.

R Väre said necessary updates on election regulations can be sent out once nominations close. She said there has already been changes made to the declarations and canvassing rules.

T Frater expressed concern over the timelines outlined in the election regulations. He said the guidelines seem overly strict in places and that the definition of online canvassing seems to allow for minor activity to be considered canvassing. He also expressed concern over what he felt was a long time for candidates to wait before they could canvas physically and online.

R Väre said the election regulations were reviewed this year with the intention of making them clearer. She said any queries related to elections could be sent to the SRC's Elections inbox or raised at the Candidate's Meeting.

Regarding online canvassing, R Väre said it was not the SRC's intention to for minor activity such as texting friends to be considered canvassing. She explained that the time allotted for campaigning is intentionally short as feedback from staff and students has suggested longer periods of time for canvassing are disturbing to students' learning. Additionally, a longer period disadvantages students who cannot campaign for the whole duration, whereas a period of two days allows students the ability to campaign whilst balancing their other commitments.

T Frater provided the SRC's definition of canvassing.

R Väre noted the mention of 'public declaration' within the definition as the key point which excludes any private exchanges with friends as being considered canvassing.

T Frater posited that private group chats with lots of participants could complicate the definition. He noted that the definition differs from last year's.

R Väre acknowledged T Frater's points and said considerable time and thought was dedicated to writing the election regulations for this year. She said the SRC could look into the issues raised by T Frater when preparing for the next election.

T Anderson asked if planned UCU industrial action could negatively impact voter turnout for the Spring Election. He also asked if there had been any discussion with UCU on where physical campaigning can take place given union members will also be on campus.

R Väre said UCU has been contacted and they have confirmed the election does not present an issue for their industrial action. With regards to voting numbers, R Väre said the strikes could impact these, however, the SRC will do its best to promote the elections and encourage students to campaign and vote.

R Whip asked what kind of questions, and how many of these, VP candidates will be given notice of.

R Väre said these candidates will receive all general questions in advance. The number of general questions is yet to be confirmed, however the total number of questions (including unseen questions) will not exceed 10.

R Väre said the Sabbatical Officers will look at the election regulations and if any information conflicts with the new rules this will be addressed.

## 8) Trustees' Report

G Connor provided a summary of the SRC's Financial Report for the period July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 to June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022.

For this period the SRC is reporting a deficit of £24,836. This comes after a two-year period of reporting a higher-than-normal surplus which was due to strike fund grants the SRC received - one of £100k in 2020 and one of £120k in 2021.

From 2021-22 until approximately 2024, the SRC will be projecting a deficit in its annual accounts due to using the designated reserves from the received strike funds to cover some the costs of its new projects and core activities.

Income during the period fell by 15% mainly due to the SRC receiving a strike fund grant in the previous year of £120k. A small increase in income, however, was seen from the printing and binding service, historical tours, and vending machine income.

Expenditure for the period increased by 6% which was expected as covid restrictions during the period lifted and this allowed physical events to be delivered in person. The strike fund grants also allowed the SRC to introduce extra support for students and societies. Examples of this include: the introduction of a GBV Drop-in service started 2021-22; an additional round of 'Train the Trainers' sessions for new Mind Your Mate trainers; a new website to support clubs and a society management system to allow clubs to sell tickets and promote events from this web platform; the introduction of SRC society email accounts and use of the SRC Holding account; a new SRC Volunteering platform and initial investigation into a new awards system for students, as well as the initial development work on the new SRC app.

There were also some savings in staff costs due to the gaps between staff leaving and the start dates of new staff. This reduced the rise in expenditure from an initial estimate of 12% to 6%.

G Connor said the UofG block grant makes up over 83% of the SRC's income during this accounting period and this reflects how financially reliant the SRC is on the University. The current outlook is that the SRC has enough designated funds from the strike fund grants for the next 2 years before it must begin using its own general reserves. She said the SRC is currently in regular dialogue with University senior management and the Student Experience Committee regarding securing additional funding so that it can continue to deliver the services it currently operates.

The Financial Report was approved by T Anderson. This was seconded by T Frater.

The continued appointment of Alexander Sloan as the SRC's auditors was approved by T Anderson and seconded by P Moran Ruiz.

The continued appointment of Govan Law Centre as the SRC's solicitors was approved by P Moran Ruiz and seconded by H Busquier Cerdan.

9) Council Reports –

a) SRC President: R Väre

R Väre said all the SRC-related actions from the Morag Ross KC GBV Report/Action Plan are progressing. H Pentleton and J Small are working with the University to develop resources for an anti-GBV campaign which will be launched in the next academic year. The Advice Centre's Conflict of Interest Policy is also currently being reviewed with a view to amending it so that both students in the same conduct case can be represented by TAC. This is due to be completed in the next academic year. The job description for a new Advice & Policy Training Officer is currently being written and this job will be advertised in due course.

Work on the Student Experience Strategy is currently progressing. The Delivery Board recently met and decided on 5 projects that will be taken to the Investment Committee in March. These include the Volunteering project and the Clubs & Societies review.

The SRC will meet with University Catering next week to discuss how they can implement better value food options on campus. A response from the University Principal has not yet been received regarding the SRC's concerns over proposed University accommodation rent increases. An update will be provided to Council members in due course and the matter will also be discussed at the Student Experience Committee.

R Väre noted that she attends several less formal meetings in the period between Council meetings, however, she does not include these in her Council report.

H Busquier Cerdan asked if the University has provided any information on how the money from proposed rent increases would be allocated in the refurbishment programme for residences.

R Väre said the Sabbatical Officers can seek clarity on this, however, it is the SRC's view that funding for residence refurbishments could also come from other areas and not solely rely on students' rent costs.

T Anderson asked for an update on CIVIS funding for the planned CIVIS trip to Germany.

G Connor said there had not been any update on this from the University and that she would follow the matter up.

b) VP Education: M Levesque

M Levesque said any College Representatives involved in the QESR Institutional Review should ensure they have reviewed the related materials as this project is reaching its end stages and Council representatives may be required to provide input for consultations.

The Student Voice Working Group has been structured to conduct an audit of practices related to EvaSys and SSLCs for the year. The audit has just begun and will take in staff responses until 27/02/2023. There will then be separate sections on how student data can be used by student representatives, and this will look at any concerns surrounding managing that data, as well as aspects of the student experience. Any Council members who wish to join P Moran Ruiz in this work should contact M Levesque.

The Keystone Building has now entered its next stage of development (RIBA Stage 2) where concepts for the building will be considered. Council members have been participating in this process and representatives should look out for communications regarding consultation work.

The Learning and Teaching Committee has now implemented workstreams for its strategy. These focus on 3 key areas which the strategy will undertake over 5 years. M Levesque will email Council members with more information and any representative who wishes to become involved in this work should contact her.

Discussions on how artificial intelligence will factor into academic conduct and integrity are currently ongoing within the University. The SRC is liaising with Student Learning Development and the Conduct

Office regarding developing the academic writing programme into an academic conduct-related unit for students to undertake when they first arrive at the University.

The SRC has been working to address issues raised regarding the University's Good Cause system. At a recent Good Cause workshop organised by the Clerk of Senate there was a strong consensus from attendees that a significant change to the system is required to better cater to students submitting claims related to disability or mental health, as well as improve the overall student experience in regard to the system. Self-certification may feature in an updated system, however, the SRC has not yet received the action list from the workshop and discussions are ongoing.

R Whip asked where College Representatives can find the documentation related to the QESR Steering Group.

M Levesque said this information was sent out by Chris Buckland. Council members should email M Levesque if they have not received this.

T Anderson said not every School is using the same process for academic extensions. He asked if there were any plans for the implementation of a consistent system which all Colleges and Schools would adhere to.

M Levesque said extensions should be submitted through the Good Cause system. She agreed that there is a lack of consistency across Schools regarding the submission of extensions and that the process for this is often not clear for students. She said this is largely due to the lack of a centralised University data management system. The University is currently looking into the long-term possibility of implementing such a system, however, short-term solutions will focus on harm reduction measures for students. M Levesque noted that there was strong support for a centralised data management system from the attendees of the Good Cause workshop.

E Makhoul asked what measures the University is taking to deal with the impact of artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT on academic conduct and integrity.

M Levesque said the University is in the process of organising an open day for Learning & Teaching Committee members to come together and discuss this issue. Members of the Computing Science department will also be involved in discussions. There are also national-level conversations taking place between higher education institutions. M Levesque said the existence of ChatGPT should not have a significant impact on the upcoming exam diet. Any Council members whose Schools say exams are being changed due to ChatGPT should contact M Levesque.

M Levesque said she does not believe the University cannot ignore the issue of ChatGPT for academic misconduct as the AI will continue to evolve and improve over time. She said the University must look more critically at the way it assesses students and adapt to developments in technology accordingly. She said work in this area is being undertaken with the University's Learning Through Assessment document which is looking at alternatives to end of term high stakes assessment. M Levesque said she expects these discussions will largely take place during the summer.

P Su said there is software which can detect the use of ChatGPT in academic work. He asked if the University has explored the implementation of this.

M Levesque said the University's Turnitin system is trying to implement these abilities. She said, however, she does not see the implementation of further plagiarism-detection measures being the University's overall solution to AI's potential impact on academic conduct.

P Su said he believes the University should instruct students on how students can effectively use ChatGPT in a way which does not constitute plagiarism.

M Levesque said she believes the University would have to teach students how to properly use ChatGPT and this is perhaps why they are looking at developing the Academic Writing Skills Programme into a programme which explores the complexities and requirements of academic conduct and assessment. She said that, in the meantime, ChatGPT and artificial intelligence should not be used as excuses to make learning and teaching conditions worse for students. Any Council members with experience of this should contact the Sabbatical Officers.

R Whip said the School of Computing Science is moving towards a programme of online/in-person exams for the upcoming diet and that students sitting exams in the Boyd Orr building will be banned from using ChatGPT. He said this decision has proved very unpopular with students and the School has not been responsive to this feedback. R Whip added that one student communicated to the School that they would be unable to make their in-person exams if these were held early in the morning and this student was not provided with any solution.

M Levesque said she is going to meet with the Dean of Learning and Teaching for the College and the School of Computing Science regarding this issue.

c) VP Student Activities: K Fish

The Clubs and Societies Survey has now been completed. The University now permits societies to book certain on-campus spaces during the day. The University has also agreed to fund the hire of an external venue for societies on a trial basis.

Within the Sustainability Working Group it was noted that a sustainability initiative is being launched within the College of Science & Engineering called 'De-carbonising the Curriculum.' K Fish said she had concerns regarding this name being potentially insensitive as it is based on an initiative designed to tackle racism in the academic curriculum. She said the University do not perceive any issues with the name. She asked Council members for their input.

M Bah said the School of Critical Studies undertakes work in the latter area and is considering dropping the name 'Decolonising the Curriculum' from its efforts. She said, as such, the University should reconsider naming the sustainability initiative in a similar way.

E Makipere said she agreed with K Fish's concerns. She said naming the sustainability initiative in a similar way trivialises the efforts of both initiatives. As such, she recommended the sustainability initiative be named differently.

K Fish said she would take this feedback to the Sustainability Working Group.

T Anderson asked if the approximate number of this year's VCS nominations could be provided.

K Fish said approximately 790 nominations were received this year and that just under 500 were received last year.

- d) VP Student Support: Hailie Pentleton
- e) PG Arts Convenor: Alex Symington

A Symington said he met with Dr Victoria Price (Dean of PGT Learning and Teaching) to discuss moving forward with learning and teaching for Postgraduate students and the formation of a new committee for this purpose.

A Symington said he is going to send his L&T survey for PGT students to Dr Victoria Price and that he will follow up with M Levesque regarding the results.

A Symington said he has still not heard back from a member of staff regarding support for a concerned student. He said he will follow this up.

R Väre said A Symington should copy in his line manager and refer the matter to R Väre and M Levesque if he still does not receive a reply.

- f) UG Social Sciences Convenor: Ross Whip

R Whip said students across different colleges have raised with him the fact that dissertation supervisor meetings are being cancelled due to industrial action but not subsequently rescheduled. He said this is causing students stress and they are not being advised on what they can do.

M Levesque said Martin Hendry has offered to help the SRC work with Schools who are not being responsive to issues raised by students. She said if there is a specific School which is experiencing issues then the School Representative should contact M Levesque. Any specific individual cases should be referred to The Advice Centre. She noted that the case that was brought forward on the issue raised by R Whip was raised at School level and the response from the School was sent to the School Representative.

- g) Chemistry School Rep: Arnav Saxena
- h) Computing School Rep: Angela Ng
- i) Critical Studies School Rep: Mariama Bah
- j) Engineering School Rep: Hugh Southall
- k) Humanities School Rep: Emma Murray
- l) Mathematics and Statistics School Rep: Jordan Baillie
- m) Physics & Astronomy School Rep: Heri Busquier Cerdan
- n) Social and Political Sciences School Rep: Irene Libelli
- o) Charities Officer: Lewis Trundle
- p) Environmental Officer: Erika Makipere
- q) LGBTQ+ Officer: Pablo Moran Ruiz

P Moran Ruiz said the School of Physics and Astronomy recently organised LGBTQ+ talks but many posters and materials related to these sessions were torn down. P Moran Ruiz spoke to the School and it is going to put in rainbow-coloured frames which can house posters for these talks. He said the School is also keen for students to deliver talks and that any interested Council members should contact him.

- r) Mental Health Equality Officer: Tony Anderson

T Anderson thanked members of Council who have contacted him to make him aware of student issues.

R Väre said if any Council members are not responding to emails Representatives should contact the Council member's and/or their own line manager.

- s) Race Equality Officer: Omar Saleh
- t) General Rep: Chaitra Bodapunti
- u) General Rep: Theo Frater
- v) First Year Rep: Abheer Kukreja

## 10. AOCB

Pak Su referenced an email chain he was copied into regarding student frustration with lab report marking. He said the chain contains an inappropriate response from a member of academic staff.

M Levesque said she will investigate the email chain and take appropriate action.

R Whip thanked M Levesque, I Libelli, S Grover and I John for their help in organising a College-wide assessment feedback project in the College of Social Sciences. R Whip said he is currently processing the responses and the results will be presented at College-level. He said any Council members who would be interested in undertaking similar work are welcome to see the results.

P Su said a survey of 80 students in the Medical School found that 86% of these students would not feel comfortable contacting the School regarding mental health issues and around 80% felt the School does not have adequate mental health provisions in place. The survey also found that many students who took the survey related experiences of mistreatment from lecturers in the Medical School. P Su said Council members have raised these issues with the Medical School and external investigators are looking into these issues. He said that Council members who wish to undertake a similar survey are welcome to approach him.

P Su said, despite the proposal initially being rejected by the Medical School, he and other SRC representatives have successfully campaigned for increased dissection sessions for students. He said the School has also agreed to allocate additional funding for travel costs incurred by students travelling to classes.

R Väre thanked P Su for highlighting these points and congratulated him on the successful implementation of increased dissection sessions. She asked if the results of the survey referenced could be shared with the Sabbatical Officers once closed off, so these issues could be raised at a senior University level.

R Väre noted that Council members are encouraged to submit their Council reports retrospectively if they do not manage to submit these prior to the deadline.

T Frater commended the survey work undertaken in MVLS by P Su. He said he would be interested to see the results of a similar survey in the Business School as he is aware of the negative impact on students' mental health caused by the way they have been treated by staff - particularly the School's Student Experience team.

R Väre said any cases of inappropriate behaviour from staff members should be put in writing and sent to the Sabbatical Officers so they can follow this up.

R Whip said he is also aware of students being treated in a dismissive manner by the Business School's Student Experience Forum. He said this has been raised with the College of Social Sciences whom R Whip has met with on the issue. He said any instances of this behaviour will continue to be recorded.

T Anderson said he has been made aware of similar issues in the School of Engineering and that he would pass this on to the Sabbatical Officers. He asked how the SRC could address this issue, given it seems to be widespread across Schools.

M Levesque said considerable work and training has been undertaken to address the treatment of student mental health in the University and certain issues have been raised at College-level. She said Council members interested in becoming involved in this work should contact their line managers and that sending out further surveys is not necessarily always the best approach. She said the wider issue of how the University talks about mental health, as well as the prospect of additional training for staff, is being considered at various meetings. She said part of the issue stems from the fact that staff training does not have a centralised point of onboarding for prevalent issues. Council members interested in becoming involved in this work should contact M Levesque or H Pentleton.

P Moran Ruiz said LGBTQ+ History Month is currently underway and is going well. He said a bracelet-making session was well-attended. Other events included a *Moonlight* screening and an upcoming zine-making workshop. GULGBTQ+ is also organising their Queerfest event which will be held in the QMU on 25/02/2023.

R Väre encouraged Council members to run in the Spring Election.

11. Date of next meeting – Thurs 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2022