

MINUTES OF SRC COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 18TH JANUARY 2024 AT 6.00 PM
MCINTYRE BUILDING
WILLIAMS ROOM/ZOOM

Present: As per sederunt

Apologies: M Bah, B Hay, C Michel, A Chakraborty, C Nield, L Leonhard

Attending: G Connor, J Small, P Swinton

- **Welcome, Apologies and Sederunt**

As above.

H Pentleton-Owens referred to future meetings of Council and asked Council members who do not submit reports to indicate the reasoning for this to the SRC Exec and the Representation mailbox. H Pentleton-Owens reminded Council members that they must submit at least 3 reports to have their role HEAR-recognised.

H Pentleton-Owens said if Council members find that they are unable to attend a committee meeting, they must send their apologies in advance. She added that Council members declining meeting invitations from the SRC Representation mailbox must let their line manager and Representation know that they are sending apologies.

- **Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

Minutes of previous meeting approved.

P Su said he would send R Whip a summary of the Medical School Exam situation.

- **Trustees Report and Financial Statements**

Gina asked any Council members with queries on the Trustee list to email Representation who will make any necessary updates.

G Connor presented an overview of the draft Trustees Report and Report, focusing on page 46 of the report (Statement of Financial Activities)

Income

The SRC received a 12% rise in its block grant funding for the period 22-23. This was awarded to help with an increase in costs in relation to high inflation.

Total income for 22-23 rose by £139,704; a 16.5% increase on the previous year.

The Glasgow Guardian received a grant from the Chancellor's Fund and the SRC secured additional strike fund funding for a new Advice Team worker to increase its service provision because of the recommendation within the Ross Report.

Historical Tours & Media marketing income also significantly grew against the previous year's figures.

Expenditure

For the 22-23 period, expenditure rose by £205,085: a rise of 24% against the previous year.

Some additional costs for the period included a new Advice Team worker and a GBV Councillor for the full year (this was only part-funded in the previous year).

The Clubs and Society support team also had an additional two new staff members added to help support a new management system for events and finance. There is also additional finance funding in place for clubs and societies to cover transaction fees and booking fees for societies using the SRC website and card machines. This amounted to a £4k saving for societies over the year. The SRC also implemented the club's management system, the annual fee for which is £2k.

Across all departments the SRC saw an increase in pricing on event materials, rising, on average, 6-10% against the previous year.

Two events, in particular, which had an above-average rise in costs were as a result of a change in University catering policy. Catering removed the option to use external catering teams for on-campus events which increased the costs against the previous year by 65% for the VCS Awards and 10% for the STAs.

The SRC also implemented a staff pay rise in line with UofG awards which was significantly higher than in previous years. This was due to inflation and pressures from unions. Rises ranged from 8% for staff on grade 5 and above, to 15% for staff on grade 3.

The year end deficit was £90,217, which was made up of £88,283 designated funds including strike fund grants awarded to the SRC in 2020 and 2021. The grants are linked to the SRC developing a new infrastructure to offer additional support to clubs and societies and volunteers. This showed as a surplus in the years the SRC received the grants. The £1,934 deficit was from the SRC's general reserves and was the result of higher inflation costs.

From these figures it can be discerned that moving into this year the SRC has £96,638 in designated funds remaining in the strike fund. 75% of this total has already been budgeted for this year, leaving the organisation in a financially vulnerable position. The SRC has therefore continued to lobby the University to have the increased costs associated with its Volunteering & Clubs and Societies services added to its block grant funding.

The SRC is currently awaiting the outcome of its budget meetings but has been recently told it will not receive an update on its funding for the next academic year until the end of March.

T Frater approved the Trustees Report and Financial Statements. This was seconded by P Moran Ruiz.

P Su approved Govan Law Centre to continue as the SRC's solicitors and Alexander Sloane as the SRC's auditors. This was seconded by H Busquier Cerdan.

- **Council Reports**

SRC President - H Pentleton Owens

The SRC has now met with the University twice to discuss its priorities for the next year-round of funding. The University has said that, due to financial difficulties incurred by the under-recruitment of PG students, it is currently unable to provide a confirmed figure of what funding the SRC will receive in its block grant. It is therefore unclear if the SRC will receive the same funding as last year, or if this figure will rise with inflation. The University has said it will inform the SRC of its funding decision in principle in early March, however, there will be review points in April/May and August/September, meaning the SRC may not know its confirmed budget until the beginning of its new financial cycle. Money from the Strike fund has already been pre-allocated to other projects, meaning the SRC will not be able to apply to this fund for additional financial support. This is concerning as several of the SRC's core services, which should be funded by its block grant, have been subsidised by the Strike fund.

The University's new recruitment strategy is focusing on recruiting students from African and Southeast Asian countries. This has seen a 400% rise in the University's Pakistani student intake and a 150% rise in its Nigerian student intake. Concurrently, The Advice Centre has seen a sharp increase in students from these financially vulnerable countries contacting them for assistance in states of financial destitution and, at times, homelessness (around 40 cases since September). Such students are directed to Financial Aid, however, the help available does not match the expense of their tuition and accommodation costs. The reasons for students finding themselves in these situations range from issues with fraudulent visa applications to issues related to sudden changes in personal income. The SRC is concerned by the correlation between the rise in such cases and the University's new recruitment strategy. H Pentleton-Owens and Graham Smith (SRC Advice Centre) met with members of the University Recruitment team who said they would be looking into developing financial literacy education resources; however, these plans do not help international students currently in financially precarious situations. H Pentleton-Owens spoke to the Principal on the matter and he has agreed to speak to Recruitment regarding the provision of short-term financial support for these students.

VP Education - Ross Whip

R Whip asked Council members aware of disruption caused by Moodle outages in the last exam diet to pass individual cases to The Advice Centre. He also asked if Council members could inform him about any Schools which were badly affected and pass on any general feedback from students on the issue, so that this could be passed to the Clerk of Senate.

The next Academic Forum meeting will take place on Tuesday 23rd January. R Whip encouraged in-person attendance for a workshop taking place at the forum.

S Blackburn said she is aware of a student who was significantly affected by the Moodle outage.

R Whip asked S Blackburn to direct the student to The Advice Centre for support. He thanked S Blackburn for letting him know and said he would be happy to speak to the student.

S Blackburn said she would contact the student and follow up with the SRC Executive afterwards.

VP Student Support – Tony Anderson

T Anderson and P Moran Ruiz met to discuss plans for LGBTQ+ History Month in February. They plan to meet with GULGBTQ+ and SRC-affiliated medicine societies to discuss their involvement. An email will also be sent to all societies asking them if they would like to hold an event as part of the month. T Anderson said he would arrange for an email to be sent to all Council members when the event listings have been published.

T Frater expressed his apologies to Council for not submitting a report.

- **Update on SRC Activity –**

H Pentleton delivered a condensed overview of recent SRC activity referenced in the organisation's budget presentation, as well as some of the SRC's key areas of concern.

In September 2023 the SRC had its busiest Welcome Fayre post-pandemic with over 15,000 attendees, 93% of which said the week was welcoming.

Since the beginning of the academic year the SRC has affiliated over 300 societies and trained over 720 society office bearers to support their organisations. 770 new volunteers have been registered who have collected accumulated over 7,000 hours of volunteering work. Moreover, the Sabbatical Officers have sat on 105 committees and working groups. H Pentleton-Owens said these statistics illustrate that students engage with the SRC's range of services extensively.

H Pentleton-Owens said offering the SRC's services this year has also presented challenges. She said, as student numbers increase and the international market continues to place strains on the support available to the student community, the strain has also increased on the workloads of the SRC's permanent staff and Sabbatical Officers. She said SRC staff have consistently been working at full capacity this year. The SRC Advice Centre's number of minutes spent with students has increased significantly from last year and there has been a rise in the number of cases of student conduct cases, complaints and appeals that TAC has dealt with. As a result, the support available from TAC for the Sabbatical Officers has been stripped back to help deal with capacity issues. Campaign activity has also been decreased this year due to the increased Sabbatical workload (the SRC Executive have been asked to sit on a further 10 University committees and working groups since last year) and this has

presented challenges to the delivery of the 4 yearly campaigns set out in the SRC's Strategic Plan. Some projects have been paused due to the strain on the SRC's permanent staff while the SRC's Communications team have been required to assist in the organisation of campaign and event activity.

H Pentleton-Owens said, while the SRC is pleased that its services are being heavily engaged with by students, any increase in student numbers would have a negative impact on the amount of support it can offer to students. As such, the SRC is currently in the process of asking the University for increased financial support for its Communications and Campaigns team, Advice Team and Clubs and Socs services. It is also asking for increased investment in the physical space in the McIntyre Building as well as in student representation more generally. The SRC is keen to increase staffing in all the aforementioned areas and would also like to develop a system of paid peer-support roles to reduce the pressures on the Sabbatical team. Council members/Class Representatives in these roles would sit on Fitness to Study panels, conduct cases or certain working groups. More information on such roles will be circulated in due course.

S Lombardo asked if the new roles would constitute new positions on Council.

H Pentleton-Owens said they would not. The roles may be organised in a system similar to the SRC's current PR team, however, the roles would only be open to Council members or Class Representatives.

- **My SRC App Presentation – Jamie Small**

J Small delivered a presentation to Council members on the My SRC app Progress Review.

- **Elections:**

- Grant Review

G Connor presented an overview of the 2023 Spring and Autumn Elections Grant figures. Election grant funding was piloted in the Spring 2023 Election. In the election there were 6 Sabbatical candidates, with 3 applying for funding and 45 non-Sabbatical candidates, with 19 students applying for funding. It was noticed that, once candidates realised how many other students were standing for positions (especially in the cases of uncontested positions), many of them did not uptake the funding. This resulted in £356 of funding unclaimed by non-Sabbatical candidates. In the Autumn Election, 10 candidates applied for funding, however, only one candidate claimed grant funding.

G Connor said the grant process worked well. She said that, based on the number of candidates from last year, there was almost the maximum amount of funding available for each candidate. G Connor said, if there were double the number of candidates in a future election, Council may want to consider implementing a step whereby uncontested positions receive a lower value of funding. She suggested this could be continually reviewed in the future.

H Pentleton-Owens suggested keeping the system the same for this year with a recommendation that next year's Council consider the allocation of funding for uncontested positions.

O Saleh posited that uncontested positions should not receive funding for election campaigns, with contested positions being prioritised instead.

R Whip said this discussion took place last year. He said that, while O Saleh made a valid point and he agreed that uncontested funding should be reviewed, if no funding was allocated for candidates running for uncontested positions these students would miss out on an important and enjoyable experience, while the SRC would not benefit from the awareness-raising that campaigns bring.

H Pentleton-Owens suggested tabling the discussion and said Council members who believe the system should be changed should submit a motion for the next meeting. She said, however, funding for Sabbatical Officers' election campaigns would continue as previously agreed.

- Ongoing Review Work

H Pentleton-Owens said the SRC has been reflecting on its pre-election support, the election experiences of PGR candidates and some Council-related technicalities. It has subsequently been agreed that the Pre-Hustings Meeting will be removed and will be replaced with a post on the SRC's website with the relevant hustings information. This will also be included in the Candidates' Meeting. This step will reduce the number of elections meetings candidates need to attend, allowing them more time for their studies.

With regards to PGR positions, the SRC has discerned that there have been difficulties for PGR students to fulfil the number of nominations they need to run in elections. This is due to small PGR cohorts and the fact that some cohorts do not have their induction weeks before SRC elections take place. It has therefore been decided that sponsors for PGR positions will include all PG students studying within the College that candidates are hoping to represent. PGR Convenors will be elected in the Spring Election and will begin their posts immediately in March. New PG and PGR Convenors will be elected in the Autumn election. Training for representatives beginning their positions mid-year will be reviewed. Nominations for PGR positions will also be kept open a further week due to PGR students' staggered start-dates and induction weeks.

As there have been issues with Council members being unable to complete the duration of their roles, or not being on campus due to finishing their courses early in the year, it has been agreed that start and end dates will be included in the role descriptions of each post. Furthermore, each candidate will be required to present their student ID upon application so the SRC can confirm each candidate will be at the University long enough to complete the duration of their role. Council members will also be required to attend 3 Council meetings in-person (excluding those with disability adjustment requirements) to help facilitate their on-campus work.

The SRC is also discussing reviewing the election section of the constitution as part of a broader review of the constitution.

H Pentleton-Owens said she would circulate a brief update on ongoing elections work to Council.

- **16 Days of Activism & GBV Campaign Report (Verbal) – Tony Anderson**

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence ran from November 25th to December 10th, 2023. During this time the SRC collaborated with the University on launching Together Against GBV – a campaign which seeks to raise awareness of the GBV support mechanisms available on campus.

Events were successful and included a flag-raising event, Protest Placard Making and a Gender Equality Mini Fair involving SRC-affiliated clubs and societies and external community volunteering partners. The largest-scale event was the Fight for the Night March which took place in collaboration with Strathclyde University Union. This event saw a large turnout from students and student unions. The SRC also held a GBV Vigil in the University chapel with this being attended by staff and students.

T Anderson provided an update on the impact of the Sixteen Days events on the SRC's GBV-related services. October was the SRC's busiest month for appointments with its GBV Counsellor. 11 students booked and attended appointments. From subsequent months it cannot be determined if the Together Against GBV campaign has been responsible for increased use of this service as November and December are typically very busy months for students academically.

During 2023, just over 12,000 students completed the Let's Talk GBV Moodle module. October saw 1,200 students complete the module. Current data suggests the mass emails sent to students regarding the module have been the most effective way of increasing completion numbers. The impact of the Together Against GBV campaign upon the number of module completion numbers will be monitored in semester 2.

Attendance of the SRC's Let's Talk About Sexual Violence workshops in November and December was the lowest during semester 1, however, this is linked to the increase in student workload during these months.

Between September 1st and December 31st, The Advice Centre dealt with 42 health and wellbeing cases, with two of these being related to GBV, one to sexual assault and 17 to harassment and wellbeing. October was the busiest month of semester 1 for TAC cases, with this being related to the new student intake in September.

The SRC website recorded the most views for its Let's Talk about Sexual Violence pages in September, with over 200 views in November additionally, illustrating that these resources were accessed across semester 1. The Advice Centre's sexual violence support webpages were viewed most in November. The GBV Counsellor landing page was most viewed in November with the appointment booking page most used in September.

The Together Against GBV campaign is now moving onto its next phase which will focus on education around toxic masculinity, consent, and positive relationships.

- **AOCB**

P Moran Ruiz referenced the Illegal Migration Bill mentioned in the Trustees Report and asked if the University has made any progress on its commitment to the 15 by 30 Pledge.

H Pentleton-Owens said a group was recently formed to look at the University's progress on the 15 by 30 Pledge. She said she sits on this committee and will follow up with them for further information on progress in this area.

P Moran Ruiz asked, with reference to the Trustees Report, if there are any plans in place to increase the percentage numbers detailed there in relation to Class Representative Skills Development; specifically, the statistics which state 69% of Class Representatives reported that some action had been taken or agreed as a result of their input and 42% of class reps reported an improvement in negotiation and diplomacy skills.

H Pentleton-Owens said the SRC's Strategic Plan outlines an aim for 80% of its participants to feel like they are making important contributions and feel valued in their work. She added that the SRC will look at how it can improve in areas which do not meet this target.

G Connor said Class Rep Survey results are used to inform discussions with the new Class Rep trainers and Class Rep training is adapted to address any concerns or feedback from the survey. Feedback is then gathered from Class Reps in the survey sent out after the training. G Connor added that, if the planned Class Rep Teams channel is set up, this will be another way of gathering feedback/sending communications to Class Reps. Class Rep work is reviewed bi-annually so the hope is the survey results will improve this year.

R Whip said, while the SRC can review and enhance its training to help improve Class Reps' negotiation and diplomacy skills, the SRC cannot force action to be taken as this is down to University staff members making their own decisions. He added, however, with reference to the first statistic P Moran Ruiz mentioned, that work is being undertaken at the Student Voice Working Group to improve this.

H Busquier Cerdan asked if there has been any mention at the Sanctuary Working Group of increasing the number of scholarships available.

H Pentleton-Owens said there are general conversations taking place around scholarships and looking at increasing the number of scholarships available for vulnerable student markets. She said she is expecting an update on this and will circulate this information to Council in due course.

H Busquier Cerdan asked if any Rector nominations have been confirmed.

H Pentleton-Owens said Paul Sweeney MSP has been confirmed as the GUU's candidate and the QMU is currently confirming its candidate.

P Su said the SRC has not had a Veterinary Medicine representative since 2020. He asked if there was a way the SRC could promote this position in the upcoming Spring Election, noting that it is difficult for the SRC to engage with veterinary medicine students as they are on a different campus (Garscube).

R Whip said the SRC has a School of Biodiversity, One Health & Veterinary Medicine Representative in position and that the SRC no longer has a singular Veterinary Medicine Representative. R Whip said he agreed with P Su's second point and said discussions are ongoing on how the SRC can best represent students who study at the Garscube campus.

L Thompson thanked P Su for raising this issue and said suggestions on how she can best represent veterinary medicine students, in her capacity as Biodiversity, One Health & Veterinary Medicine rep, would be welcome. She said she now sits on the Life Sciences Portfolio Committee and is hopeful that this will help her in representing these students.

H Pentleton-Owens said M Bah is looking for volunteers to sort through the 2024 VCS Awards nominations. An email on this will be circulated to Council members in due course and participation is encouraged.

H Pentleton-Owens said an agreement was made with David Duncan and Glasgow Students Against Arms and Fossil Fuels (GAAF) for the University's Finance Committee to vote on an urgent divestment from the arms trade at the Finance Committee meeting on 24/01/2024. H Pentleton-Owens was contacted by GAAF on 15/01/2024 and asked if she would present their report to the Finance Committee. As this was the first time H Pentleton-Owens had been approached by GAAF and, due to the very short notice given to view the paper and agree to present on it, as well as the nature and depth of the paper, she did not believe it was appropriate to present the paper without first bringing it to Council for its consideration. She said she will meet with GAAF on 19/01/2024 to discuss how the SRC can work with them on their campaign. If Council agrees, then she will ask if the paper can be brought to the next Council meeting for discussion and approval. H Pentleton-Owens said, at the Finance Committee meeting she will reiterate the SRC's historical stance that the University should divest from the arms trade – a stance which can be revisited if Council members wish. A hard vote at the meeting is not expected but rather a subgroup will be formed to review the issues presented. H Pentleton-Owens has requested membership of this group already to ensure the student voice is heard. She said will continue to forge links, where possible, with GAAF on this work.

- **Date of next meeting** – Thursday 15th February, 2024