

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY THE 20th FEBRUARY 2025 AT 6.00 PM

ROOM 201, MCINTYRE BUILDING AND ZOOM

Present: As per sederunt

Apologies: L Alhusaini, A Storer

Attending: B Hay, M Card, J Small

1) Welcome, Apologies and Sederunt

P Morán Ruiz reminded Council members to state their full name and position while speaking, and to be mindful to use the microphone for Council members online.

2) Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of previous meeting approved.

3) Learning and Teaching Strategy - Student Partnership Consultation – Moira Fischbacher-Smith (Vice-Principal - Learning & Teaching), Sarah Armour (Head of Employability and Student Opportunity), Holly Thomson (User Researcher for The Transformation Team) and Louise Keogh (Transformation Project Communications and Engagement Lead)

Presentation delivered to Council members to briefly recap progress of Learning and Teaching Strategy since 2020, student engagement channels utilised so far, and early development of My Futures offering. Council members provided brief feedback related to presentation.

4) Referendum Update

P Morán Ruiz spoke to the referendum update paper previously circulated to Council. The referendum is planned to take place in the fourth week of March. This timing was chosen to allow for effective engagement while considering other key events in the academic calendar. In terms of structure, P Morán Ruiz emphasised the need for fairness and transparency of the referendum process. Similar to other student organisations holding referendums, there will be 'yes' and 'no' campaign teams, which will enable student-led campaigns and for the SRC to facilitate the referendum from a neutral position. Other aspects would include clear criteria for participation,

such as a requirement to be a current student and must agree to abide by campaign rules. The SRC would also appoint a Returning Officer to proceed in a similar process to SRC elections. MSL will be used as the voting platform, which is already used across other activities of the SRC and will allow for more functionality and adaptability to meet the requirements of the referendum.

P Morán Ruiz said the referendum question from the paper, which is still being considered, states, “Should the University stop investing in companies that earn more than 10% of their revenue from the arms and defence industry?” P Morán Ruiz said details of referendum process will be more widely released after the Spring Elections.

L Wong asked if the SRC will be monitoring the financial resources allocated and spent by each campaign team in the lead up to the referendum vote.

P Morán Ruiz said the SRC will provide each campaign with some limited non-financial resources.

D Calvert asked if communication about the referendum process will be made available before or after the Spring Elections.

P Morán Ruiz said this process will be announced after the Spring Elections.

D Calvert asked that if Council members are expected to remain neutral in an official SRC capacity, what obligations does that place on Council members who are also candidates running in the Spring Elections.

B Hay advised that in such scenarios, candidates would not be expressing a view in their capacity as a Council member but in their capacity as a candidate in the Spring Elections and should be able to participate.

K Roberts asked if consideration has been given to PGR studentships that are currently funded by defence contractors or defence-adjacent ones.

I Duane said the referendum question is not a final policy and does not determine how or when or by what timeframe the University would divest or by what route. There may be students funded through said measures, but it would be about lobbying toward policy indicative of what those results of the referendum are.

P Morán Ruiz acknowledged that whether there is divestment or no divestment, there would be an impact to the student population whether by perception or practicality. P Morán Ruiz said that is why the referendum structure includes ‘yes’ and ‘no’ student-led campaigns, which would allow for further democratic debate.

K Roberts asked if the SRC has confirmed the exact wording of the referendum question and how the impact of the referendum results would be explained.

P Morán Ruiz said the SRC would not expect anyone in their individual capacity from the 'yes' or 'no' campaigns to take the results onward. P Morán Ruiz said the results of the referendum could be used by the SRC to lobby based on the data.

L Thompson asked to clarify if it is allowed for someone to take a stance regarding the referendum and be involved in a campaign in their personal capacity but not in their capacity as a SRC Council member.

P Morán Ruiz said yes.

L Wong asked, with regard to the results, if the SRC will act on the simple majority of the votes or a larger majority of votes consisting of a higher percentage of the vote beyond 51%.

P Morán Ruiz said it is important to note that the SRC would be using the data to lobby the university to build momentum from the results of the referendum. P Morán Ruiz said even if it was a 51% result in favour of divestment, that wouldn't mean the university would directly divest. It would need to be the continued work student representation to lobby the University to make that happen.

L Thompson said that she does not see a clear link between the referendum question and the University encouraging student placement at companies invested in arms. L Thompson said she thought the question may need to be clearer to define what 'stop investing in companies' looks like at the University in practice.

P Morán Ruiz said that earlier steps leading to the referendum vote has largely looked at divestment through a financial view. He said the question wording can be revisited but is concerned that too many changes run the risk of diluting the intent of the referendum.

A Castro commented that they believed the way the question was worded would lead to more questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. A Castro said they believe the SRC should clarify what the question means by divesting, etc.

P Morán Ruiz expressed that it is difficult to get a perfect question but that it was a priority to word a question that is concise but also encapsulates the feelings toward the topic without bias.

5) Council Reports

Written Reports submitted -

a) SRC President: Pablo Morán Ruiz

The SRC continues to highlight concerns over the general Higher Education landscape. Higher education sector finances indicate Russell Group universities, as well as those sector wide, are facing significant financial issues. The SRC has regularly emphasised the need for the University to be prudent to protect the student experience and exercise caution in terms of financial management. P Morán Ruiz said the SRC continues to be in conversation with SMG as institutional failures in this sector can pose great challenges, with cost-saving measures having the potential to trickle down to impact the student experience.

P Morán Ruiz said although it is early in the recruitment cycle, there have been several challenges and volatility in the student recruitment market. Nonetheless, the SRC still raises the issue that a variety of services are working at max capacity due to a 19.3% increase in student numbers over the last five years.

P Morán Ruiz said he continues to work on the new University strategy and how the student experience will be integrated through the central strategy along with two strands focused on learning and teaching, and research. P Morán Ruiz said the SRC has met multiple times with members of SMG to share the SRC vision of how student experience should be supported.

The SRC is organising a Student Refugee Week for the first time from the 17th to 21st of March. Refugee Week is typically observed in June but holding it in March allows for increased student participation and is common practice at other UK universities. The hope for the week is to increase the visibility, impact, and outreach to student refugees and to celebrate with community-building events during the week.

b) VP Education: Heri Busquier Cerdán

Nominations for the Student Teaching Awards (STAs) closed 17th February. H Busquier Cerdán said 1,154 nominations were submitted, a 10% increase from the year before. Shortlisting for the STAs is scheduled to take place 24th February.

The Class Rep Conference is scheduled for 21st February. Sessions for the conference will be delivered by P Morán Ruiz and H Busquier Cerdán, by members of the Learning and Teaching Strategy unit, and by Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs). 81 tickets have been reserved for the conference so far.

H Busquier Cerdán said he's continued work the with Student Voice Working Group (SVWG) on the Student Voice framework. This work has recently included two consultations in February with students and staff. H Busquier Cerdán said feedback was positive, but some changes are still needed to the draft before submitting to the

University Senate.

c) VP Student Activities: Angelica Wilson

Nominations for Volunteering, Clubs and Societies (VCS) Awards closed 17th February. A Wilson said a noticeable increase of well over 800 nominations were submitted, and she thanked Council members who assisted with the shortlisting process. The VCS Awards ceremony is scheduled for the 13th March.

69 students travelled with A Wilson and I Duane on a St. Andrews trip that was organised by the SRC for January Welcome. A Wilson said the trip was very well received by students and she recommended it be offered again in the future.

A potential SRC Council trip is being organised to visit the University's Special Archives Collections. A Wilson said the University has a special SRC collection that Council members could view during the trip. More details to follow.

P Su asked if the St. Andrews trip required a paid ticket.

A Wilson said the cost was £10 per ticket, a cost which was subsidised by the SRC, and included a guided town tour and a ride on the coach to and from St. Andrews.

d) VP Student Support: Iris Duane

I Duane thanked N Gillies for their work to support LGBTQ+ History Month activities throughout February. Events included a flag raising ceremony, introduction to activism and social change placard making and film screening, a "Pizza and Pride Bracelet" evening, zine making, and Drag 101 with PGR Society and Mature Students Association. I Duane said a LGBTQ+ timeline would also be put on display in the James McCune Smith Learning Hub. I Duane recited a few facts from her research, including that the SRC voted to establish the first gay society at the University in 1975 – 50 years prior to present-day Council.

International Women's Week will run 3rd to the 9th March. I Duane said events planned by the SRC involve several collaborations with societies. Some events include Self-Portraits and Sweets, Accessible Viniyoga, a Women of Colour tea and community event, and a trip to Glasgow Women's Library, among others.

The SRC continues to push accessibility forward and lobby the University to address access requirements and provisions for disabled students. I Duane said that the University is scoping to digitally map the larger buildings and grading rooms to improve timetabling practices. I Duane said a recent success was the creation of a

book return installed in the JMS to make the process more accessible. I Duane and N Smith met with the president of the Glasgow Clyde College Student Association to discuss the “World Changers Need Access” campaign and Disability History Month.

I Duane said the Cost of Living Action Group (COLAG) report has been released internally. COLAG has also been restructured and with recommendations from P Morán Ruiz and I Duane, additional members have been added to the newly-reformed group.

Glasgow City Council have recently budgeted £500,000 toward feminist city planning. I Duane reminded Council that feminist city planning was one of the SRC’s focuses during the 16 Days of Activism campaign. I Duane said the SRC had an influence in the Council moving forward with that priority.

L Thompson asked for a timeline update regarding the University’s progress in relation to the EmilyTest Gender-Based Violence (GBV) charter.

I Duane said the EmilyTest is still moving forward, but there was a delay in the progression of the paper to Senior Management to get the resourcing for it and hire a EmilyTest manager due to UKVI issues taking precedent. The paper was admitted to the last Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee (EDSC) meeting, and I Duane said Principal Anton Muscatelli has said in his own words that he is 100% in favour of the EmilyTest. The University has met with Fiona Drout MBE, the mother of Emily and founder of the EmilyTest, and have attended the EmilyTest conference. I Duane is confident the University will continue to pursue this and said there is an upcoming EDSC meeting 12th March which could provide some insight to its progress, but the Gender Equality Group is not scheduled to meet until April, so she does not expect an in-depth update until then.

- e) UG Science and Engineering Convenor: Max Thomson
- f) UG Social Sciences Convenor: Daniz Alasgarova
- g) Age Equality Officer: Suzanne Blackburn
- h) Environmental Officer: Saskia Drijver Headley
- i) International Students Officer: Andreia Castro
- j) Mental Health Equality Officer: Batseba Asmelash
- k) Widening Participation Officer: Amy Hutchison
- l) Biodiversity, One Health & Veterinary Medicine Rep: Laura Thompson
- m) Critical Studies School Rep: Una Dale
- n) School of Humanities Rep: Freya Dinning
- o) Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing School Rep: Ebrahim Rezaei
- p) School of Modern Languages and Cultures Rep: Duncan Calvert

- q) Psychology & Neuroscience School Rep: Somaria Maharaj
- r) First Year Rep: Alina Chauhan
- s) First Year Rep: Leo Wong
- t) General Rep: Sarah Millar

6) AOCB

P Morán Ruiz wished anyone running in the upcoming Spring Election good luck.

A Wilson reminded those running in the Spring Election to be mindful of the regulations to avoid breaking election rules.

7) Date of next meeting – Thursday 20th March 2025