

Union Council Minutes

Meeting Information

Date:	Thursday 15 th June 2023
Time:	14:00 – 16:00
Location:	Hybrid; MS Teams & SU 1 st Floor Activities Hall

Attendance Registry

Role	Present/Apologies/ No Show	Name
Executive Team		
SU Chairperson	Present	Michael Pritchard
SU President	Apologies	Atul Rana
Vice-President Education	Present	Kwan Yuet Adora Wong
Vice-President Student Activities	Present	Aroubah Mazhar
Vice-President Welfare	Present	Sana Azhar
Raise and Give Officer	Present	Anastasia Manousaridou
Women's Officer	Present	Manahil Khilji
International Students' Officer	Present	Sugat Bhagwant Londhe
Disabled Students' Officer	Present	Anchal Chauhan
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Officer	n/a	<i>Vacant</i>
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer + Officer	Apologies	Kirsty Allan
Postgraduate Officer	-	Taher Gadiwala
Mature Students' Officer	Present	Vijay Anand Venugopal
Commuter Students' Officer	-	Batoul Jamal Abu-Affar
Sustainability Officer	-	Krutika Ganeru
Student Activities Executive Team		
Chairperson	-	Annas Mazhar
Events & Fundraising	-	
Media & Design	-	
Welfare & Development	-	Siobhan Driscoll



Society Representative (Faith & Culture)	-	
Society Representative (Academic)	-	Hind Al Husaini
Society Representative (General Interest)	Present	Jemima Snell
Club Representative	Present	Anastasia Manousaridou
Club Representative	Apologies	Emilia Dyer

Minutes

Agenda Item	Description	Minutes
1.	Welcome	Chair (MP) welcomed students to Council. Noted that the online meeting is being recorded for benefit of taking minutes. Voting will take place next week and the recording of council will be available.
2.	Apologies for Absence	
2.1		Above in Attendance Registry. Chair (MP) acknowledged that some apologies had come through since the agenda was released.
3.	Previous Minutes	
3.1	3.1 – UC2023.03	Chair (MP) noted minutes for the previous meeting are available and Council will need to approve them
3.2	3.2 – UC2023.03	Chair (MP) noted minutes for the emergency meeting in November and minutes from Council in December will need approving Chair (MP) also noted that minutes from the most recent Emergency Council and Council are being prepared and will also need approving.
4.	Approval of any appointments delegated to Union Council	
		Chair (MP) noted that there are a few appointments that are rolling over as previous meetings have not quorate and didn't have enough people. Council has final say on whether trustee board members get approved.
4.1.	4.1 – UC2023.03	Chair (MP) noted Lee Marsham is the first appointment needing to be approved. He is a local councillor in Nechells ward, Birmingham City Council. Notes from the panel around his appointment can be found and there are various online profiles for him and links to find those profiles.
4.2	4.2 – UC2023.03	Chair (MP) noted the University have nominated Alison Levey who is Associate Pro Vice Chancellor (Students). This was previously Saskia Hansen and now she has left the University, the University has nominated Alison.

		<p>These have been discussed in more detail in previous meetings.</p> <p>No questions or queries were raised.</p>
5.	Matters Arising from previous meeting	
5.1		No matters arising
6.	Executive Committee Plan Updates	
		<p>Chair (MP) noted that the Executive Committee have several objectives they are working towards which were approved by Council. Now is opportunity to hear from your elected Executive Committee about what work they've been doing towards those priorities and for you to judge how effective you believe they have been.</p>
6.1.	6.1 – UC2023.03	<p>Chair (MP) noted that the President (AR) is unavailable so unable to offer an update and asked the VPE (KW) present if she could offer an update.</p> <p>Accessibility plan:</p> <p>VPE (KW) noted the library accessible door has been repaired. VPE (KW) also noted that the DSO (AC) attend NUS National Conference to represent Aston. VPE (KW) also noted that there are ongoing repairs to a University gender neutral toilet in the Main Building.</p> <p>Cost-of-living plan:</p> <p>VPE (KW) noted the University had provided £1 meals as part of their cost-of-living plan. There is an understanding that there may potentially be a different type of food being made available. ASU Pantry is ongoing and processes to measure footfall are being considered given the large uptake still. Given the increase in food being distributed the University and SU are considering replenishing stocks on Monday and Wednesday to accommodate student need.</p> <p>Democracy and accountability plan:</p> <p>VPE (KW) noted Executive Committee have written an open letter to the Vice Chancellor (VC) regarding the pay related to University staff who have gone on strike. The letter noted that the importance of the funds supporting students impacted by the strikes. The letter was received by the VC and acknowledgement was made that the funds from the strike staff will be allocated to student hardship funds.</p> <p>VPE (KW) noted that there is a student panel involved with appointing the new Director of Library Services as the current Director, Helen Curtis, is leaving.</p> <p>VPE (KW) noted that she has been discussing having more student space on campus; potentially on the 7th</p>

floor of the Main Building. Discussions have also included having a monitor installed in each study space which will have a traffic light system to notify students of how busy the space may be.

Supporting marginalised and under-represented demographics:

VPE (KW) noted that the Commuter Students Officer (BA-A) has spoken with Alison Levey about having lockers provided and to review the timetable to better support commuter students. It was noted that the Commuter Students' Officer (BA-A) and RAG Officer (AM) will be raising money to help provide Iftar meals during Ramadan for commuter students who may be travelling at the time of Iftar. It was also noted that the VPW (SA) will also be raising money to provide Iftar meals to those in Syria, Yemen, Gaza, Pakistan and other countries.

RAG Officer (AM) noted that she and SA Executive Team are running a 'This Girl Can' campaign as part of Women's History Month alongside the VPW (SA) and Women's Officer (MK) planned events.

VPE (KW) noted that she and the LGBTQ+ Officer (KA) are working on producing pronoun badges for all.

Support for International Students:

VPE (KW) noted that the SU have applied through the University's Strategic Investment Fund for new International specific advisors for the Student Advice team.

Mental Health and Wellbeing:

SA Executive Team are discussing and organising activities that students want to address mental health and wellbeing. In the process of organising a BBQ picnic for club and society members to participate in with games and socialising.

Chair (MP) noted the VPW (SA) continues to organise embroidery classes and other mindfulness exercises in conjunction with the Commuter Students' Officer (BA-A). Quiet reflection time organised in the Martin Luther King Centre. Chair (MP) also noted that the VPE (KW) will be distributing Energy Bags again during the Spring Exam period, part funded by the Careers & Placement team.

No questions or queries were raised for the above.

Support for Clubs and Societies:

		<p>SA Executive Team Club Representative (AM) noted that the VPSA (AM) was unable to attend Council but is planning to run First Aid training for clubs. Also noted that Sport Aston are in the process of hiring a dedicated physiotherapist for students to access. A third point relating to a mental health campaign in sport focusing on mental health for male & non-binary sportspeople was unable to be expanded on.</p> <p>A question was asked regarding the campaign focusing on male and non-binary sportspeople; what about women? Chair (MP) noted that Mental Health month doesn't have much of a campaign around male and non-binary focus but that it wasn't to take focus away from others. It was noted that any further discussion should be directed to the VPSA (AM) once she is back at work.</p> <p>Accountability of the SU: Chair (MP) noted officer accountability is an area of focus. Part of this is to promote the National Student Survey as a means of feedback. No questions or queries were raised.</p>
6.2.	6.2 – UC2023.03	<p>Chair (MP) noted that only one of the officers is in attendance so only VPE (KW) is able to deliver an update.</p> <p>VPE (KW) noted the following campaigns and initiatives she has been working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aston Expert Fair - Free support videos and maps - Energy Bags - ASU Pantry - Bring Your Own Bowl - Union Senate - Lunar New Year - Academic Awards - PGR Questionnaire - Pronoun badges - Aston Expert Hunt - Accessible awareness video - Food parcel distribution <p>No questions or queries were raised for the above.</p>
7.	Reports from other bodies	
7.1.	7.1 – UC2023.03	
8.	Motions for debate from Executive Committee	
8.1.	Proposed Bye Laws Updates	
9.	Motions for debate from other Student Members	

9.1.	9.1 – UC2023.03	<p>Chair (MP) noted that SA Executive Team Club Rep (AM) would have a few minutes to speak for the motion. Then opportunity for anyone who wants to speak against it following by any questions.</p> <p>SA Executive Team Club Rep (AM) noted the new byelaws updated the SA Executive Team to include new roles such as Accessibility Rep and RAG Officer. The Club Reps are now separate as well as a separate Faith Society Rep and Cultural Society Rep. SA Executive Team Club Rep (AM) noted her own experience and that the SA Executive Team Chairperson (AM) was VPSA for 2 years. It was noted that the Media & Design Representative doesn't serve a purpose given that the SU Marketing team handles both social media and design. It was noted that an additional administrative role would be more beneficial to the team, such as a secretary role.</p> <p>It was noted that the RAG Officer would fulfil the fundraising role and therefore it would make more sense for the Events & Fundraising Representative to concentrate on Events only.</p> <p>It was noted that for many students Faith and Culture are linked together so having a Representative where they come together would accommodate that overlap.</p> <p>It was noted that the Team and Individual Sport Representatives would make it unbalanced for Clubs that would be split between the respective Representatives. It was felt it worked well this year to have just the 2 Representatives who split the clubs between them by mutual understanding.</p> <p>The Motion proposes the following amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create an Executive Secretary who is a non-voting member - Change 'Events & Fundraising' to 'Events' Representative - Return to 'Club' Representatives - Return to 'Faith & Culture' Representatives <p>Chair (MP) noted there were no students wishing to speak against the Motion.</p> <p>A question was asked regarding should the Motion be voted through as to whether it would impact the SA Executive Team election for this academic year.</p> <p>Chair (MP) noted that the Trustee Board would need to ratify any change to the byelaws, but this could be potentially done outside of the usual Trustee Board meeting schedule. Depending on when the SA Executive Team election takes place there is no reason why this couldn't be in place in time.</p>
10.	Guest Speakers not related to the Motions debate	
10.1.		No Guest Speakers



11.	Other Business Approved by the Chair	
11.1.	Ratification of Positive Commendations	
11.2.	Ratification of Honorary Life Memberships	
12.	Business that has arisen since the 7-day deadline for items and deemed to be an emergency by the Chair	
12.1.		<p>Chair welcomed a brief statement from Student Activities Executive Committee.</p> <p>This was Annas Mazhar (Chair) and Anastasia Manousaridou (Club Rep). They would like to hold the SU officers accountable and have prepared a report including opinions and feedback from other club and society committee members.</p> <p>The statement outlined that there was a need for further communication and engagement from the SU President. They found the President uncaring and not interested in listening to students. Number of attempts were made to bridge the gap and work around availability. A meeting was scheduled with club committee members with the president and VPSA in attendance</p>

Decisions and Actions

Item	Decision/Action	Lead	Due Date	Status
1.				
1.1.				
2.				
2.1.				

Date of Minutes Approval

Date:	
Time:	