Aston Students’ Union – Union Council Minutes

Tuesday 2nd of March 2021, via Microsoft Teams, 4pm – 5:15pm

77 attendees: meeting is quorate

Approval of agenda – approved

Approval previous minutes – approved

The Chairperson provided an overview of how the Union Council works.

Attendees were given the option to vote yes, no, or abstain to each motion proposed in the meeting via a poll.

Item 1) Motions

* **Item 1.1: Punjab Farmers Kisaan Protest (UC2021.04.1a)**

*Motion proposes to mandate the Vice President Student Activities to work with colleagues and students to raise awareness on this issue on behalf of the Students’ Union.*

Q: How would you raise awareness?

A: This will mainly be done through social media; a statement has already been posted on Instagram.

Q: How will you simplify the background on this issue for someone who doesn’t have an economics background?

A: I will be working with colleagues to simplify the information and creating posters on it as well.

Q: Shouldn’t we be raising awareness of other issues like Uighur Muslims as well on social media?  
A: With awareness of other issues, I am always happy to promote and put forward motions for these vital issues and share awareness on them.

Voting: Motion passed

Item 2) Officer Updates

* **Item 2.1: Oral Updates from Full-Time Officers**

*SU President:*

* Met with the Minister of State for Universities to ask them questions about tuition fees, rent, and hardship funds. The SU have also submitted some written questions.
* Preparing for the upcoming SU elections.
* Started a sustainability campaign at The Green – the site is now run entirely by renewable energy.
* Volunteering at the food distribution centre.
* Unite the union has been recognised as the SU’s workplace trade union.

Q: Do we know when we will get responses to the written questions that were submitted?

A: Unfortunately, no.

*VP Welfare:*

* Launched the Student Wellbeing Call Centre this month.
* Working on Women’s History Month and Mental Health Week.
* Creating social media communications for elections and awareness days.
* Working on the student submission of the University’s annual monitoring return cycle for 2020-21.

Q: Is there a way we can opt out from receiving the Student Wellbeing phone calls?

A: Yes, you can contact your relevant College co-ordinator to be taken off the list.

*VP Education:*

* Working on plans to review the policy and raise awareness on Academic Integrity.
* Working on Decolonising Aston.
* Planning to introduce a dedicated postgraduate section on the SU website.
* Worked with the University to implement the new Safety Net policy.
* Organising focus group sessions for students to create a line of communication with the University.

*VP Student Activities:*

* Raising awareness for the Farmers Protests in India.
* Working with the activities team to improve on initiatives for students.
* Creating videos to promote different perspectives on employment opportunities.
* ‘Club/Society of the Month’ is back to reward students.
* Involved in the Sustainability Committee.

Q: I applied to be a student union rep for my course. What next?

A: VP Education – you should receive an email and will be able to access training material on BlackBoard as well. Emails will also be sent to you nearer the time about student rep sessions to join.

* **Item 2.2: Oral Updates from Part-Time Officers**

*LGBTQ+ Officer:*

* Finished recording the LGBTQIA+ podcast.
* Aston University LGBT+ Working Group and LGBTQ+ Officer will now be working together.
* The LGBT+ President has been working on, with University staff, a Name Change Policy.

Q: What is the Name Change Policy?

A: It is a policy to prevent transgender and non-binary individuals from being referred to their birth/former name (i.e., deadnaming) in places like online lectures by equipping staff with information and resources to help these students.

Q: Do you still want committee members to send you the videos in support of the LGBTQ+ members?

A: Yes.

*Union Chairperson:*

* The Executive Committee minutes are now available on the SU website.
* A proposal for changes to the Union Council have be made and will be discussed with the Executive Committee.
* Participated in the LGBT History Month podcast with the LGBTQ+ Officer.

*Sustainability Officer:*

* Green Week will commence on the 8th of March and there will be webinars hosted and challenges set by the SU.
* The Sustainability Committee has launched.
* The ‘Keep Aston Tidy’ campaign will be launched soon.

*Disability Students’ Officer:*

* Set up the Disabled Student Committee and applications are now open.
* Working on a digital accessibility campaign.
* Meeting with ProVC Diversity & Inclusion to make progress on accessibility.

Item 3) Independent Trustee Approval

The Union Council was required to ratify the appointment of the new (external) Trustee to the Trustee Board. The SU President provided council attendees with an explanation about the Trustee and the experience they will be bringing to their new role.

Voting: Appointment of Independent Trustee approved

Item 4) Update from the Trustee Board

The Board have been reviewing the long-term strategy for the Students’ Union. This involved creating a survey and sending it to students for comments and feedback.

The Trustee Board will be meeting again next week.

A.O.B.:

N/A

**Next meeting:**

**TBC.**