

Minutes

Student Parliament

Thursday 7th November 2024

Mandela Auditorium, Level 1, Strathclyde Student Union

Attendees: VP Community, VP Education, VP Inclusion, VP Sport, Business PGT, Engineering UG, Engineering PGT, Engineering PGR, HaSS PGT, HaSS PGR, Science UG, Science PGT, Democracy Convener, Disabled Students' Rep, LGBT+ Rep, Part Time Rep

Apologies: Business UG

Absentees: President, Business PGR, HaSS UG, Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Rep, Interfaith Rep, International Students' Rep, Mature Students' Rep, Women's Rep

Staff: Alison McNaughton, Leo Howes, Morna Simpkins, Niamh Molloy

1. Call to Order

Democracy Convener

2. Reports

Presidents

a. President

- President was not in attendance so report was not given.

b. Vice-President Community

VP Community apologised for limited updates due to illness

- Some progress has been made with the student pantry and hopefully there will be some confirmation on space and funding soon
- Continuing to have discussions with staff about what refreshers will look like and discussion of renaming it 'Welcome Week' to have more of an inclusive focus

c. Vice-President Education

- Had a meeting with the Deputy Director of Finance at the University where they explored the idea of monthly fee payments and looked at the university's debt management policies/services (e.g. how they inform students when fees are due)
- Looking to connect up services (advice hub, finance, wellbeing)
- Also looking at reducing variability of flexible and part-time study fees as these can sometimes be greater than full-time study fees (this is a particular concern due to the number of Widening Access students studying part-time). VPE has managed to get a cap of a maximum 10% increase overall but is working to get this reduced further

- Also working on personal circumstances – trying to close the loop so that students get immediate support, reasonable adjustments and extensions. This is turning in to quite a big project but VPE will continue working on it throughout the year

d. Vice-President Inclusion

- Lots of successful events were run for Black History Month which shows that there's a real appetite for cultural events amongst the student population – creative events were particularly successful. VPI is planning to run a diversity week, potentially in February given the positive response to Black History Month events
- Had a meeting with Strath Inspire about Global Entrepreneurship Week starting on the 11th of November. There's now an entrepreneurship module for all students available on MyPlace that looks at developing basic skills and increasing employability
- Working with the Careers Centre on a podcast that answers questions particularly about the international student experience and featuring experiences from international students
- Currently preparing summary feedback from disabled students on wellbeing. There was a conversation about changing the name of the representation role from Disabled Students' Rep but after chatting to Jo, it was agreed that students would prefer to keep the title as it is
- Had conversations with students graduating this year and the feedback was mostly positive. There are some concerns about students whose visa expires in January but have dissertation resists and are unsure when they'll get the results (can't apply for graduate visa if they don't have the results)

e. Vice-President Sport

- Has started planning for Girls' Night In – hoping to get some increased education around periods in sports and mental health as well
- Scottish Student Sport Parasport Festival held at Strathclyde. This was really well attended and there were a great range of events
- Was in St Andrews for the Scottish student development committee. Currently working on a project looking at affiliations with governing bodies to see what we can get for students from the governing body to make it worthwhile and this will be compiled into a big document

3. Policy Briefing Group Update

VP Community

There are currently only two members of the group and we need more members to help move this forward. Please reach out to the democracy email if you would like to join.

AP Everyone: Email democracy account if you would be happy to join the group

4. Ratification of Trustees

VP Education

Student Trustee- Ketong Zhang

Lay Trustees- Tom Hall, Chris Rydings and Niamh Hegarty

VP Education explained that the union is a charity, so we have a board. Student trustees can serve two years and then apply for more time. Lay trustees are outside members with specific knowledge.

Student Trustee: Keton is a PGR student with a specific interest in mental health and how it intersects with different cultural groups.

Lay Trustees: Tom Hall (works with Universities UK, knowledge of the sector at a national level). Chris Rydings (expertise in IT and understanding of AI). Niamh Hegarty (works in Cabinet Office, policy sector). Claire Johnson (expertise in information governance – helping with policy and governance side of things)

Unanimous vote to approve and ratify trustees

5. New Business

Society Balls

A student brought up the topic of society balls and mentioned a lack of support and fed back that this was not a very inclusive or community-minded decision.

VP Community responded, understood the frustration, especially with the delay in giving this news to the students. This decision was made in line with what other unions do – the union will continue to support balls within the union but not outside the union. Students are advised to contact Lisa Brennan (lisa.brennan@strath.ac.uk) if they have any questions about the matter.

PGR International Tuition Fee Cap Query

A question was raised about how the tuition fee cap impacts PGR students as they pay differently depending on funding.

AP: Contact VP Education (strathunion.vpeducation@strath.ac.uk) to discuss this

Two motions were brought to parliament

Motion to endorse NUS x Glasgow School of Art Statement in response to Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis' (GCRC) decision to cut ties with Rape Crisis Scotland

- Strath Union has been invited to join a statement expressing concerns over GCRC's decision to cut ties with Rape Crisis Scotland. It was put to parliament that we should join the statement to stand in solidarity with our trans and non-binary students.
- It was stated that this is particularly important given recent election results and rhetoric of hatred and discrimination towards trans people.

Motion passed unanimously

Motion to uninvite GCRC to attend our Fight For The Night (FFTN) march

- It was noted that GCRC have been invited to our annual FFTN march on the 28th of November and feels this invite should be revoked
- One officer reflected that they should not be invited as an organisation but individuals from the organisation are more than welcome to march
- Another officer noted that they still provide a lot of support for students so staff should be able to attend as individuals
- Suggestion that we could create a badge to say we stand in solidarity with transgender survivors of sexual assault or wear specific colours, perhaps pink and blue

Motion passed unanimously

6. Adjournment

Democracy Convenor

Meeting adjourned with a thank you to attendees for their commitment to upholding union values