

## Minutes

### Student Parliament

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Level 8 Open Space, Strathclyde Student Union

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Attendees: President; Vice President Community; Vice President Education; Faculty Rep Business UG (late); Faculty Rep Business PGT; Faculty Rep Business PGR; Faculty Rep Engineering PGT; Faculty Rep Engineering PGR; Faculty Rep HaSS PGT; Faculty Rep HaSS PGR; Faculty Rep Science PGR (late); Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Rep; Disabled Students' Rep; LGBT+ Rep; Part Time Students' Rep

Apologies: VP Inclusion, VP Sport

Absentees: Faculty Rep Engineering UG; Faculty Rep HaSS UG; Faculty Rep Science UG; Faculty Rep Science PGT; Democracy Convenor; Women's Rep

#### 1. Welcome and Call to Order

*Democracy Convenor*

- a. Members Present
- b. Apologies
- c. Declarations of Interest (if any)
- d. Minutes and Matters Arising

Minutes passed without amendment.

#### 2. Reports

*Executive Officers*

- a. *President*
  - **Election Season:** Noted that it is election season and said she was wishing good luck to all of the candidates. Emphasised that the democracy team are here to support all candidates and that they can be contacted at [strathunion.dem@strath.ac.uk](mailto:strathunion.dem@strath.ac.uk)
  - **CEO Update:** Delighted to report that Morna Simpkins, CEO, passed her probation review which means we now have a fully-fledged CEO
  - **Strategic Alliance Framework:** The Strategic Alliance Framework was presented to senate and it seemed positive and we're on track to meet a lot of objectives but the fire alarm went off just after – will provide parliament with any updates
  - **Block Grant Funding:** Talking to the university about block grant funding – has asked for an increase and will update parliament once these conversations have taken place

- **Rent Increase:** Been having discussions with the university about rent in university accommodation and they haven't seen eye to eye on things. A 10% rent increase has been proposed and it doesn't seem like this will change

*b. Vice-President Community*

- VP Community had sent in a full update which is available [online](#). They also provided a brief update in person, as below
- **Campus Pantry:** A space has been confirmed for the Pantry, TL123, next to the quiet room. It will likely operate for four hours a week, with an additional hour for stocktaking, and be open on Mondays and Thursdays
- **SHAG Week:** SHAG Week went really well in January although the sexual health workshop had to be cancelled due to the storm – hopefully will be rescheduled.
- **Student Volunteering Week:** Student volunteering week was very successful and we were able to showcase the hard work of our volunteers.
- **Societies GM:** Societies GM went really well and there was a great speaker from Glasgow Children's Hospital
- **Entrepreneurship Badge:** Working on getting entrepreneurship mini badges for societies – good progress has been made and just waiting for the final details
- **Working Group Attendance:** Attended senate and several working groups such as the ResLife working group and the Climate Emergency Action Group social. Hoping to get the Climate Assembly (staff and student joint collaboration) up and running again and the VP Community is keen for this to be supported.
- **Engineering Student Zone:** The Engineering Student Zone has opened up which is a social space for any Engineering students
- **STAR Awards:** The Student Achievement and Recognition (STAR) Awards will take place on Thursday 22nd May. Students are encouraged to make nominations and can submit multiple nominations for all categories. The categories are Sports, Education, Campaigns, Community, Societies and Overall.
- **LGBT+ History Month:** LGBT+ History Month (February) has been a great success and VP Community has been providing support on this
- **Sustainable Investments:** Met with Newton Investment Management about continuing Strathclyde's sustainable investments

*c. Vice-President Education*

- VP Education has provided a full written update which can be found [online](#). They also provided a brief update, as below.
- **Strategic Alliance Framework:** There has been some really good progress made with the Strategic Alliance Framework (SAF) points
- **Closing Feedback Loop for Personal Circumstances:** There has been great engagement on closing the feedback loop to improve support for personal circumstances. In the short term, a communication group is working to ensure students know what the current system and can and can't do, and to make sure students know where they can get support.
- **Fee Administration Review:** Working with the university's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) on a fee administration review. Currently mapping out different routes for support and pushing

for monthly fee instalments and greater transparency for flexible and part-time students, with the Vice-Principal looking at this from an equality perspective

- **Ethical Investment:** Continuing to push for divestment from fossil fuels and encouraging greater transparency so that students can review and improve the policy in the future. The review of this policy has been delayed on several occasions so really encouraging students to create pressure and noise so that we can push this policy through this year.

d. *Vice-President Inclusion*

- Vice President Inclusion was unable to make parliament but sent her updates in advance
- **Palestinian Students' Scholarships:** Met with the Alumni and Development Office to seek support for scholarships for Palestinian students
- **Success Overseas:** The first episode of the Success Overseas podcast has been really well received and VP Inclusion is reaching out to more international students to participate in future episodes
- **Race Equality Charter:** Presented an update on the Race Equality Charter to the Student Experience Committee

e. *Vice-President Sport*

- No update from Vice President Sport

### 3. Items of Business

a. **Policy Briefing Group Update**

*VP Community*

We will review and consider the following policies: inclusive language, Climate Crisis, Plant-based Campus and Sustainable Futures. Policies can be found [here](#).

#### **Climate Crisis – Strath Union's Areas of Focus:**

- This policy is about having climate education in the curriculum and our current VP Education is working to ensure education for sustainable development is embedded in inductions. There's a Climate Emergency Action Group at Strath Union and we're hoping to see the re-emergence of the Climate Assembly (a collaboration between students and staff).

#### **Sustainable Futures:**

- Lapses this year
- Involves the products we sell, looking at green responsibility, Fairtrade status and is a partnership between the union and university to promote sustainability.

- A question was asked about how this relates to the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement/policy but it was clarified that this policy relates solely to the use of sustainable/fairtrade and free-range products

#### **Inclusive Language:**

- This policy calls for staff and student representatives to commit to the use of inclusive language which includes but is not limited to all Union staff (including elected representatives) using pronouns in email signatures, asking students for their pronouns when interacting with them and avoiding using gender and/or family specific terms
- There were some concerns raised about the use of pronouns in signatures being mandated as this might 'out' certain individuals or force them to conceal aspects of their identity. There were discussions about whether this should be amended to encourage, but not require, the use of pronouns in email signatures

#### **Transition campus catering to 100% plant-based:**

This motion was passed by parliament in October 2023 but required approval from Strath Union's Trustee Board due to its financial and reputational repercussions, which wasn't granted.

- Brought to parliament a few years ago to make the catering menu 100% plant-based by 2050
- A working group was set up to present findings and discuss with catering about more feasible options

#### **4. Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)**

*Democracy Convenor*

#### **Student Excellence Awards Funding Change**

Postgraduate Research Representative for HaSS brought up some concerns for funding for existing PGR students. One of the internal fundings – Student Excellence Awards – had been available to existing PGR but not for this year and wasn't communicated. These students thought it would be available for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year but they've just been told it won't be.

- Discussion that the University must provide greater clarity for students about what funding is available as it is unfair for students to be left in the lurch without accessing to funding they thought they could apply for – real concerns about student welfare
- It was also brought up that stipends have not been increasing in line with tuition fee increases so this is something that calls for a wider discussion
- Vice President Education asked if we could clarify if this is happening at a faculty or university level/if there are discrepancies in different faculties

#### **Call for CCTV in lifts**

(content warning: the following paragraph contains a brief mention of sexual harassment. If you are affected, please reach out for help through the [union](#) or an [external](#) organisation)

A student asked if the Union/University would consider putting CCTV in lifts due to reports of the sexual harassment of students in lifts. There was a discussion about the importance of protecting students and staff and that sexual harassment should be taken seriously. Student also brought up concerns about locker rooms not having CCTV cameras so if a theft happens, nothing can really be done about it.

## **5. Adjournment**

*Democracy Convenor*