

Student Parliament Minutes

Monday 2 December 2024

Level 8 Open Space, Strathclyde Student Union

Attendees: VP Community; VP Education; Faculty Rep Business UG; Faculty Rep Business PGT; Faculty Rep Business PGR; Faculty Rep Engineering PGR; Faculty Rep HaSS UG; Faculty Rep HaSS PGT; Faculty Rep Science UG; Faculty Rep Science PGT; Faculty Rep Science PGR; Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Rep, Disabled Students' Rep, LGBT+ Rep

Apologies: Democracy Convener; VP Inclusion; VP Sport

Absentees: President; Faculty Rep Engineering PGT; Faculty Rep HaSS PGR; Interfaith Rep; Part Time Students' Rep; Women's Rep

Staff Attendees: Alison McNaughton, Leo Howes and Niamh Molloy

Summary

- VP Education and VP Community provided their updates
- Discussion about large upcoming events/awareness months such as Winter Welcome, SHAG Week and LGBT+ History Month
- Policy Briefing Group provided their updates and had another call for participants
- Interfaith Rep was removed due to lack of attendance, in line with Strath Union's Schedules (available [here](#)).

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Democracy Convener

Unfortunately, the Democracy Convener was unable to attend so the meeting was chaired by VP Education. Only two VPs (VP Education and VP Community) were able to attend.

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

2. Reports

Exec

- a. President

President was unable to attend so report will be sent later.

b. Vice President Community

- 2nd Societies GM (27th November) held with a slightly changed format which seems to be working
- The volunteer social (22nd November) was very successful. A reminder was given that reps are volunteers and can attend volunteer socials and events
- Refreshers' is being made bigger this year and has been renamed Winter Welcome and will be a full month event running from the 13th to the 31st of January
- Still working on the Student Pantry and progress is being made. Now has connections with Beauty Banks, a charity that provides toiletries and hygiene products free of charge. We had the first delivery last week and will hopefully be receiving another delivery in the new year.
- Attended a successful People Make Planet workshop which is part of the plan to push the uni to improve ethical investments
- Attended the Wonkhe (higher education institute) conference
- Held the university's first Safer Gambling Week which was successful and plenty of resources are now available on the VP Community's Instagram and throughout the union
- Took part in the Fight For The Night (FFTN) march on the 28th of November. The march had hundreds of attendees and allowed for a real strengthening of the connection between Strathclyde Students' Union and universities and unions across Glasgow
- 16 Days of Action (UN campaign against SGBV) still ongoing – there's a trip to the Glasgow Women's Library on the 4th of December and an exhibition at the Glasgow School of Art featuring the collaborative piece created at the parallel and post-march FFTN event
- Continuing to plan for SHAG (Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance) Week which is happening beginning of Semester Two

c. Vice President Education

- Continuing to work on the Personal Circumstances point of the Strategic Alliance Framework.
 - Working to close the feedback loop and improve student experiences
 - Students can now self-upload personal circumstances for staff to access straight away which should hopefully allow for support or accommodations to be put in place more quickly
 - Trying to get monthly fee instalments in place for greater flexibility for students
 - Trying to improve connection and communication between university support services such as advice/finance/academic support so that students have a more well-rounded approach to support
 - Continuing to work on advocating for part-time students to reduce the impact of increased fees for part-time students
 - Aiming to have an exploration of the impacts of fee increases on part-time students in January
- Encouraged students and staff to sign the People and Planet's [open letter](#) to universities
- Student Representation
 - Has been running drop-in sessions with pilot project reps
 - Attending meetings with department staff and working with reps to ensure they can be part of creating the change that students want, rather than just reporting what change students want

- Working with the comms team and reps to ensure that programme reps feel connected with the union and with students
- Attended the UK Quality Council away day where fellow sabbatical officers presented the key challenges faced by students in the UK which were then discussed throughout the rest of the session
- Will be attending the Tertiary Quality Education group and the next one will be discussing AI and its place in higher education. Please feel free to send any feedback or suggestions on this to Charlie at strathunion.vpeducation@strath.ac.uk
- The Teaching Excellence Awards are coming up so please get in touch with any feedback about this
- Continuing to have meetings about ethical investments and involved in discussions about improving consistency of board of markers across departments
- Encouraged representatives to look at policies to make sure the university is meeting these and please get in touch with Charlie if we know certain policies aren't being met in specific departments e.g. three week policy for the return of marks

d. Vice President Inclusion

Vice President Inclusion was unable to attend the meeting so report will be sent later.

e. Vice President Sport

Vice President Sport was unable to attend the meeting so report will be sent later.

3. Policy Briefing Group Update

VP Community

VP Community and LGBT+ rep met and looked at the seven policies that are due to lapse.

Access to exam transcripts and average marks

This Policy was around students not being able to see their transcripts after exams, or how their marks compared to the class average.

- VP Education noted that access to exam transcripts is also in University Policy so does not necessarily need to be in Union Policy

More ethical water in union and campus

This Policy around cutting down on plastic bottle use by banning the sale of bottled water and increase water fountains around campus as well as selling low-cost water bottles.

VP Community plans to discuss this with Phil and Rose (Head and Deputy Head of Commercial) and potentially bring to parliament in January.

Banning negative marking

This Policy was around campaigning for the end of Negative Marking. Negative marking is used in some departments in assessments where a correct answer is +1 mark but an incorrect answer is -1 mark. Therefore, if you had sat a quiz and answered 15/20 questions correctly instead of receiving 75% as you would with regular marking schemes you receive 50% due to the deduction of marks for incorrect answers.

This is an active policy until 2026 but please could Faculty Reps get in touch if they feel this is something that needs addressing as an open discussion is welcome.

Lecture recordings for all

This Policy was around to encourage the university to record all lectures and upload them to MyPlace. There are current talks at the University around this issue, or if there are other accessible methods that can be used in its place.

This will lapse at the end of 2026 and cannot be retained again.

VP Education noted that the Learning Enhancement Committee are looking at the use of digital resources as a key priority so this would be a great time to discuss if lecture recordings are the best use of digital space/what people want to see on MyPlace.

Sustainable Futures

This Policy was in lieu of a sustainability policy. It followed the requirements for the NUS Green Award (which included the banning of Nestlé products and making clothing in the merch store sustainable).

Discussion that this would be a good one to improve on. VP Community will have a conversation with the Commercial team about this alongside the ethical water conversation.

There was also a discussion about Nestlé products. There was potentially a policy specifically banning the sale of Nestlé products but not sure – and it certainly isn't a standing one.

Strath Union Cares

This Policy was around supporting Care and Estranged students. This policy means that there are regular meetings between the Care Experienced and Estranged Society and the Exec as well as with the University and Who Cares Scotland.

There currently isn't a specific post within the union dedicated to Widening Access but just because this policy would lapse doesn't mean that this work would stop within the union.

Conclusion on Policy Discussion

Parliament had no issues with the way this group currently runs. The LGBT+ rep reminded parliament attendees that they can join this Policy Briefing Group by emailing strathunion.dem@strath.ac.uk.

VP Education noted that it might be helpful to have information about whether the asks for each policy are happening or not to determine whether new policies need to be put in place.

4. Removal of Non-Executive Officers

Chair

Parliament ratification of the removal of the following Reps subject to Item 13.e.6.a of the University of Strathclyde Students' Association Schedules. Named Reps will be invited to speak prior to voting.

- i. Alaya Khare - Faculty Rep HaSS UG
 - HaSS UG rep formally apologised for not attending the previous two parliaments as was unable to access email address for UG rep position and has only recently received access.

A unanimous decision was made to not remove the rep from position.

LGBT+ rep extended an invitation of support and offer to help if any issues arose whilst in post.

- ii. Md Noor Ahmed – Interfaith Rep
 - The Interfaith Rep was not in attendance at parliament so no speech was given

A unanimous decision was made to remove the rep from the position.

This position was up for renewal in spring anyway so no changes required to election time.

5. Any Other Competence Business (AOCB)

Chair

Disabled Students' Rep

Disability History Month takes place from the 14th of November to the 20th of December. They hosted a few events last week for the neurodiverse and Disabled Student Access group which were well attended, and they received positive feedback from.

They also attended the Student Experience Committee and informed parliament that there will be a general look to see if we should no longer attach marks to attendance for any student as this is potentially inaccessible and unnecessary.

LGBT+ Rep

There was a very successful event last week to celebrate the 60 years of Pride at Strathclyde.

The LGBT+ rep also wanted to share that February is LGBT+ History Month and plans on organising several events for this. It was noted that the university has a plaque for Sir Brian Souter and there was a discussion about the possibility of decorating this plaque in celebration of the month and in response to the controversy around Souter's involvement in anti-LGBTQ+ campaigning. There was also a discussion about the potential of looking to remove his honorary degree from the university.

6. Adjournment

Chair

No further business. Meeting adjourned.