**02/11/2021 Student Council MINUTES**

Held online via Zoom

95 Council Members in Attendance  
Guests: Nina Anderson-Knox, Christopher O’Donnell  
Sabbatical Officers: President, VP Education, VP Student Development, VP Welfare and Wellbeing  
Chair: Peter Ilesanmi

1. **Welcome**

Chair welcomes everyone to the meeting. The Representation and Communications Team Leader provides an overview of how Council will run explaining that Sabbatical Accountability and Question Time will be joint with the Senior Management Question Time, then members will debate the policy ideas submitted by students and voting will take place via Polls on Zoom.

1. **Senior Managers and Sabbatical Officer Question Time**

*Nina Anderson-Knox, Head of the Quality Enhancement and Standards Team; and Christopher O’Donnell, Head of Learning Transformation at UWS will be your guests this meeting. Nina is responsible for making sure that education at UWS is up to standard, and that the student experience is continually improved. Christopher is responsible for the teaching and learning innovation, designing assessment and curriculum with academics. Both Nina and Chris are keen to collaborate with students.*

Chair welcomes guests, Nina Anderson-Knox and, Christopher O’Donnell, and Sabbatical Officers. Invites Nina and Chris to introduce themselves. Nina Anderson Knox outlines the departments role in assuring and enhancing quality and standards across UWS for all academic provision, adds she has also taken on responsibility for academic issues such as disciplinaries and plagiarisms. Chris O’Donnell outlines he is in a new role supporting the work being taken forward by Johnathan Powles (Vice Principle Learning, Teaching and Students) and has responsibility for curriculum design, development, and implementation of the new Curriculum Framework, including collaboration with students.

Chair invites Sabbatical Officers to introduce themselves.

President, Ellie Gomersall notes she is looking forward to the meeting. Encourages members to ask questions about our work and Officer activities, is hopeful for an announcement on graduations very soon. Welcomes any questions on her report.

Vice President Education, Kevin Miguim, welcomes members and encourages questions and suggestions on the work he is doing from members, also notes members can email the team with any questions.

Vice President Welfare and Wellbeing, Luke Humberstone, provides an update from Report. There is a new programme of ‘try something new’ with Team UWS. Notes he is doing ‘Move’ for Movember which is encouraging folk to walk, run or cycle 60miles for mens mental health. Adds the Thriving Learners survey results and recommendations will be published very soon, the survey asked students in Scotland about their mental health.

Vice President Student Development, Claire Morris, notes with members it’s her first time attending Council and is looking forward to it. Adds she ran for the VP role as she wanted to help other students with challenges she faced to ensure everyone can have a great student experience and enjoy their time at UWS. Notes with members her Survey exploring students experiences of coming or returning to campus is now open and encourages members to fill it out.

Chair thanks guests and Officers for introducing themselves and invites questions from members

Q. Member notes the communications from the University on myday and email is very frequent. asks how decisions are made about what and how information is communicated and have the sabbs had input to any.

A. Nina Anderson-Knox explains the Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) noted that student communication is an area for improvement and a working group was set up looking at different ways we can communicate, have a student survey to ask how students would want to be communicated to, for example does it always have to be central or could it be from PL’s or the Union etc. Would welcome thoughts on how we’re doing it, both positive and negative.

Q. Member asks what students can do if they are having difficulties with departments.

A. Nina Anderson Knox explains the Hub is best placed to signpost students and it’s recorded to follow up so if there are any delays or if something isn’t dealt with appropriately, there’s a record.

Q. Member asks what is the Union doing about accommodation for International students as COP26 has impacted on this and students haven’t been able to secure accommodation. Also notes that students come from different backgrounds with different levels of digital skills and hasn’t seen any programmes to support students with digital skills. Also asks, if there will be a tuition fee’s reduction for international students as they didn’t get the experience they expected.

A. Nina Anderson Knox notes she will take away the accommodation issues and will come back to members. On Academic and Digital Skills, student services can provide support for this. Notes with members the University are aware of the issues of the interaction with the digital skills module on Aula and it’s very disappointing that it was taken over by racist, misogynistic and very discriminatory language, we are taking it very seriously and taking appropriate action. This module was supposed to support students with IT/digital skills but it had to be taken down.

A. Chris O’Donnell adds that in creating the new curriculum framework there is a commitment to academic and digital development, and self development and how does what we do fit into that. We’re also looking at points of contact for specific challenges.

A. Ellie Gomersall notes that one of her manifesto pledges was to support better communication with students, having input to the communications going out is important with the Sabbs being consulted as experienced students. Adds that with big things affecting all students, we can put out joint comms and notes that sometimes there’s too many notifications and may miss somethings, so prioritising communication is also a challenge.

A. Kevin Miguim, further adds he has heard students struggling to secure accommodation but that it’s not a quick fix. Notes we have raised it with the University and we’re looking at how students are supported to gain accommodation before they get here.

A. Luke Humberstone notes with members his understanding is that residences team (UWS accommodation) are opening up more capacity in halls so more rooms are available.

Q. Member asks about how hybrid learning will checking students are attending and present, for example with breakout rooms they don’t work as no one wants to say anything, can these be managed better.

A. Nina Anderson Knox notes there is a need to engage in those spaces it’s an opportunity to discuss and debate the material.

A. Chris O’Donnell notes that it’s disengaging for students to be online for 3 hours and we’re asking schools to do things differently. If using breakout rooms there should be clear guidance and support to engage. Online should be equivalent to what you’d get in the classroom, we’ll go back and discuss this with the curriculum group.

Q. Member notes there is not a lot of support for dissertations and asks if there is University wide approach to change or enhance distance dissertation support.

A. Luke Humberstone notes he is working on Dissertation Stress and this could tie in. Asks if member can email him with further info and notes with members he’s keen to have students on the group, get in touch with him if you’d like to be involved.

Q. Member notes they’ve had enquires from their cohort about any mentoring support or services available at UWS.

A. Nina Anderson Knox notes with members the Buddy Scheme provides advice and guidance for starting University. The Union also have buddies to support here too. Asks members what type of mentoring would they want? Member notes that 1st years had struggled with their first essay and asked lecturer for help but they were unable to provide an example. Nina Anderson Knox explains the marking and grading scheme could be used here to show what a grade A or C would look like. There’s also options to work with students in higher years of study known as ‘family groups’ which is subject specific.

Chair thanks members for their questions and thanks guests for responding.

1. **Review of previous minutes (Paper 2)**

Minutes accepted as accurate

1. **Policy debate (Paper 3)** 
   1. **Evening Study Spaces – Submitted by Tarita Vasama**

Proposer explains that the policy asks for more evening and weekend study spaces, adds the cranny used to be open but now closes at the same time as library at 5pm. Could the times be extended particularly at weekends, it closes at 5pm also and some students have commented directly they’d like a 24hr space.

Member notes this has been raised previously, there are security concerns at Paisley, but is in favour of it and doesn’t see why at weekends it can’t be open until 9pm

Clarification: Kevin Miguim asks if the policy is asking for the times to be expanded or if it’s asking for more spaces to be provided. Proposer notes ideally expanding the opening hours to cover weekends but also having more places open would be good.

Chair moves to vote

Policy passes

* 1. **Bring Down The Statue – Confronting Racist Symbology – Submitted by Matthew Cameron**

Proposer notes policy was submitted as part of the Greens Student Group and it’s asking for the Witherspoon statue to be removed and reference to him removed, there is also a provisional option for it to be removed and placed in a museum.

Question: Member asks if the statue would be replaced, and with who or would it be left as an empty space. Adds that if we can explain why we’re asking to take the statues down, there might be more backing. Proposer notes that John Witherspoon was a known slave owner in the west of Scotland.

Member notes that although the statue should be removed, it should be a community discussion as it doesn’t just affect UWS students, it’s a local issue as well. Luke Humberstone notes that the policy would lead to a discussion with the community and there are a number of options and none of them include keeping the statue where it is.

Chair moves to vote

Policy passes

* 1. **Plea for refund of half of tuition fees for international students due to Covid 19 Challenges – Submitted Anonymously**

Proposer notes that international students didn’t get the experience they hoped for or paid for and asks if they can have a reduction in fees to redress this.

Ellie Gomersall notes that she does empathise with this the policy and the impact online and hybrid delivery has had. Explains that she feels this policy should be rejected as it places a ‘price’ on education and we believe education should be free for everyone.

Members accept this however feel it would be a good gesture on part of the University if something was given back.

Luke Humberstone note that a refund on fee’s could be pursued via the complaints route and the Union advice workers would be able to support students with this, it may be too late to do this for last academic year. However there are lots of students from different institutions across the UK who’ve attempted this and have not been successful.

Kevin Miguim further notes that the University needs to be clearer about what students can expect and will get as part of the hybrid delivery so students can make informed decisions about where and how they study.

Chair moves to vote

Policy rejected

* 1. **UWS’ Approach to On-Campus Learning and Teaching – Submitted by the Sabbatical Officer Team**

Ellie Gomersall explains the policy was written by the sabbatical team, notes it’s about thanking the staff who’ve followed the University’s policies on hybrid learning and teaching which are meaningful, also acknowledging that hybrid is a useful tool for learning. Feedback from students where that’s been happening is that they are really enjoying it. Unfortunately many classes don’t run like that, and it’s not working so this highlights where things can be improved.

Members expressed both their positive and negative experiences with online and on campus

Learning.

Chair moves to vote

Policy Passes

**e. Zero Tolerance Policy – Policy Lapse**

Chair introduces the Policy Lapse and asks members to consider if they’d like to keep the policy or let it fall. There are no comments

Chair moves to vote

Policy Passes

Chair closes section on policy and thanks members for their contributions, notes policies not discussed will move to the next meeting.

Chair thanks members for participating in Council and closes the meeting.