**Student Council MINUTES 18.11.2020 – 1.30pm – 3.30pm**

**Held via. Zoom.**

1. **Welcome and Introduction.**

The meeting was chaired by Union Chair, David Laffan.

Chair welcomes Reps to meeting and thanks Lucy Meredith and Jonathan Powles for joining Council on behalf of the UWS Senior Management Team.

Chair notes with members that this is a Union space and is a safe space, reminds members to be respectful of each other, that the meeting is being recorded and that private messages can be seen afterwards once saved. Chair asks members to ‘rename’ their profile with their full name and preferred pronouns (he/she/they). States that Reps are welcome to speak and ask questions however when not speaking to keep the mute button on.

Chair notes that this is the highest ever turnout for Council at 134 and thanks everyone for attending.

1. **Review of minutes from the previous meeting**

Review of minutes – no items raised.

1. **Senior Management Question Time**

Chair invites Lucy Meredith, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Jonathan Powles, Vice Principal of Learning, Teaching and Students to introduce themselves.

Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Lucy Meredith, thanks members for inviting them both along and is pleased to be part of this record breaking democratic event. Informs members she has been working in the sector 30 years, including being a lecturer up through to Deputy Vice Chancellor, has also worked in environmental health in England. Adds that she has been in post at UWS for 3 months but was Interim Pro Vice Chancellor Learning and Teaching previously. Currently working with Colleagues including Sabbatical Officers through the Covid crisis including contingency planning.

Informs members a key focus of work has been the ‘Creating Strength from Adversity’ project which focused on planning for reopening the campuses and welcoming students back at the start of Term. Several working groups were set to support all aspects of welcoming student back, these are now closed and the work has been streamlined into other areas of work including a new Student Experience project staring in January. Notes that she also deputises for the Principal, and transnational education and partnerships are within her remit/

Vice Principal Learning Teaching and Students, Jonathan Powles, thanks members for inviting them along, notes that this is the first opportunity he’s had at UWS to speak to a large group of students. Informs members he started at UWS remotely from Australia in August and has only been in Scotland for one month, noted the very warm welcome received from UWS and Scotland.

Notes with members he is responsible for the Policy and Strategy related to Learning, Teaching and Students including Learning Technology such as Aula and as well as student facing services like Student Services/Student Hub which has lots of touch points with student body through e.g. Counselling, funding and advice, Disability Services etc. Notes that he is looking forward to working on the Student Experience project with Lucy and other colleagues exploring the student journey from rooms to fees, support and Personal Tutors. Adds that at UWS we really are here for students and would welcome direct feedback from all students on what’s working and what’s not.

Chair thanks Lucy and Jonathan for their introduction and opens questions from members.

Q: Member thanks both of them for joining the meeting. States that in relation to the John Witherspoon statue and the Witherspoon building, the Principal was sent an email requesting consideration of the statue to be removed and the building to be renamed. The President of the Union received a response to this request which suggested that the response should not be made available to students. Member asks if the statue will be removed and the building renamed and why the response is so secretive?

A: Lucy disagrees that the response was secretive. States that conversations around renaming buildings and decolonisation of Universities generally will continue to be had and is more prominent, discussion about the statue or artwork will be picked up by Race Equality Working Group. Notes that with Covid, many things have been postponed but states she would like the conversations to start again soon, adds that she doesn’t like naming buildings after people anyway and understands why this is important. Through the Student Experience project, they are committed to looking at what and how we teach.

Q: Members states that students graduating are concerned about having to pay the fee for graduating, even if they don’t attend, why is this?

A: Lucy informs members a letter is being issued clarifying the fee. Students are charged £10 to attend the virtual graduation ceremony and this includes receiving the parchment, a badge and pendant. For those not attending who have paid the fee, they will receive a refund. Any student not attending will still receive their parchment.

A: Johnathan adds that the University has processes to follow for conferment of degree’s and thanks students for their forbearance on the issue of graduation fees, notes that the University are hearing what students are saying and are looking for a longer term solution.

Q: Member asks if students paying their own Tuition Fees will be refunded some of their fee as they aren’t getting a full service, not able to access some facilities or resources?

A: Lucy explains there are no plans to reimburse students for tuition fees and there would be other implications of doing so.

A: Johnathan adds that moving online has come at a significant cost, providing as rich a student experience as possible and as close to what an on campus experience would be.

Q: Member states that students have raised concerns about how exams will work this term, how will it affect honours students?

A: Johnathan explains the exams will be broadly similar to last term but we’ve had more time to prepare and have moved away from exams where possible. Where exams do take place, technologies will be used to make it more seamless and technical support will be provided during exams, unlike last time.

Q: Member states there are accessibility issues for first year students and no assistance regarding technology use. Explains that it appears to be dependent on the lecturer whether we receive transcripts or recordings. This has given great concern for first year students with many discussing dropping out. Member asks what provisions will be in place to make access better and to ensure all lecturers, at the very least, provide recordings of lectures?

A: Lucy explains that there are policies in place for this issue and that every lecture should be recoded which was ratified by Senate. Adds that where this is not happening students are welcome to feedback to Jonathan or via the Sabbatical officers in a private setting.

A: Jonathan adds that all online materials need to be compliant with the law and it shouldn’t be happening. Invites members to contact him in private to discuss the issue further, or let the Sabbatical Officers know. Member further asks if it should be raised at an SSLG and in the Reps Teams forum to see if others are affected. Johnathan encourages this and adds that he and Lucy meet with the Sabbs regularly and welcomes all feedback.

Q: Member asks if there is a plan to provide students with physical ID cards as some students do need these?

A: Johnathan explains due to the challenging circumstances we couldn’t have students coming in to collect their cards, a good alternative was issuing digital ones. Physical cards were necessary for use of library, gaining access to some rooms and placement activity. We are working through getting physical ID cards by the Christmas break for those who needs a card for placements for example and during T2 there will be a more systematic approach to getting cards out.

Q: Member states that students last year received a classification based on their three best modules, due to coronavirus. We were informed that this year classification will be back to normal for us, i.e. based on all modules. Many students feel this is unfair because in this year we are still affected by Covid. Is the classification negotiable or can it revert back?

A: Lucy explains changing the classification can’t be negotiated and isn’t possible under the current Regulations.

Q: Member states they are a 4th year accounts student and the students in their class are concerned about staff workload and over allocation of dissertation students. Member asks if UWS are struggling to have appropriate staff numbers and why retired lecturers or PHD students are supervising student?

A: Lucy states that all staff workload is allocated with their line manager as part of their work planning. Workload can encompass lots of different things such as teaching, research, preparation for conferences, personal tutoring or supervision. In terms of external supervisors, they are paid to supervise student and although 30 students is unusual and may be seen as high, supervision could be all they do and therefore is manageable.

Chair thanks members for their questions and thanks Lucy and Jonathan for their time and contribution in answering students questions. Chair invites further questions for Lucy and Jonathan which can be put to them outside the meeting. Lucy and Jonathan also thank members for their questions and welcome any others.

1. **Trustee Report**

Chair notes this is presented for accountability purposes. The Board of Trustees are responsible for the management, administration and legal aspects of the running of the Union and its activities. Members who have questions in relation to the Trustee Report should direct these to Sabina Lawrie.

1. **Sabbatical Officer Reports**

Chair requests Sabbatical Officers to present their plan of work. States that questions regarding the plan or the Sabbatical report can be asked at the end or in the chat.

The President thanks Chair for time to present the Plan of Work. Each Sabbatical Officer talks to their Plan of Work. Members are reminded that a number of projects are either on hold, or not achievable at the moment due to Covid circumstances

Member asks if Reps can send the plan to their class. Sabbaticals state that this is encouraged and to feedback any questions to Sabbs. Council will be updated on actions.

1. **Policy Debate and Voting**

Chair explains that policy passed is enacted by the Sabbatical officers and stays in place for 5 years. Adds that policies will be debated in order of popularity as determined on the UWS Union Website (<https://www.uwsunion.org.uk/representation/sauwsstudentsvoice/>). Explains that policy must pass with at least 50% for the policy.

Chair further explains that during this meeting voting will take place via the Polls function on Zoom and once the policy has the majority required to pass or not, we will move onto the next vote, there are a large number of policy ideas to discuss and this will help with our time.

1. Helping Students with visible/invisible disabilities and illness. Submitted by Clare Hunter.

A number of members speak to this policy explaining that there is a lot of furniture which isn’t accessible to students or staff with mobility issues or who are wheelchair users. Members highlight the policy includes UWS and the Union purchasing Sunflower Lanyards used by those who identify as having a hidden disabilities to highlight they may require support, a few have been purchased already but many more are needed. Members also note the Union have a student let group directly addressing accessibility issues and encourages others to get involved (<https://www.uwsunion.org.uk/society/accessibility/>).

Chair moves to vote

Passed

1. Better contact with class reps. Submitted by David Laffan.

Chair explains the policy asks for better methods for communications between reps and students. Believes this is being worked on by the Union via their website.

Chair moves to vote

Passed

1. Lack of course specific books available in Paisley. Submitted by Kirsty Randall

Member explains the policy asks to ensure that where a core text book is required that this is available at the campus the module is being delivered. Explains that they have asked for a book at the start of Term and still hasn’t received it.

Members note that there needs to be a good balance of where books are as some modules run across campuses but there should be more physical books available or provide ebooks and access to journals more.

Members also note the very high costs associated with academic books and if there is a chapter or journal which students must use, this should be made available by the lecturer.

Chair moves to vote

Passed

1. UWS: A 21 st Century University which still discriminates against left-handed people. Submitted by Ellie Gomersall.

Member explains that the policy asks the Union to campaign to ensure that at least 10% of furniture is suitable for left handed users (approximate to the general population). Explains that its very uncomfortable and affects concentration at some workstations because they are built for right handed people. Members also note that this reflects some of the discussion earlier related to accessibility issues.

Chair moves to vote

Passed

1. Free Period. Tax free. – Policy Lapse

Members note this is a policy lapse and the policy has essentially been competed due to the changes to Scottish Government policy to supply sanitary products to all Schools, Colleges and Universities in Scotland.

Members note that the Scottish Government policy doesn’t include supplying London campus and therefore the policy isn’t fulfilled and should stay to have the University provide free products at London.

Chair moves to vote

Passed

1. Travel Policy to reduce emission.

Member note that this was proposed last year pre-covid. Explains that passing this policy would ask the Union Board of Trustees to consider banning Union staff and Sabbatical Officers from taking flights within the UK, encourage electric vehicle use and use online resource for meetings. Adds that climate change is impacting us quickly and we need to take action now.

Chair moves to vote

Passed

1. Card payment at the Union.

Chair explains that the Union sites do now have a card payment option.

Chair moves to vote

Passes

1. Gym opening times earlier than 12pm. Submitted by William Clark.

Chair explains the policy asks the Union to campaign for earlier opening times at the University gym. Member notes that the Gym opens at 10am now and has bookable slots during Covid restrictions. Members feel an 8am opening would be better.

Chair moves to vote

Passes

1. Caring for Student Carers – Policy Lapse

Chair explains this is a policy lapse and asks for student Carers to receive better support and to campaign for (what was) the Buttle Mark. Members note that there is a Parents and Carers student group but would encourage this policy to be kept as a principle.

Chair moves to vote

Passes

1. Safe Space Policy – Policy Lapse

President explains this policy is being reviewed by the Board of Trustees and encourages members to keep the policy while a new one is being developed.

Chair moves to vote

Passes

1. Gender Neutral Bathrooms – Policy Lapse

Members note that there are now Gender Neutral toilets at each campus however asks members to keep the policy as it will further support accessibility and helps to create safe spaces. Members also note that where the current toilets are situated it can be difficult to get to from some of the teaching area’s.

Clarity is provided that this won’t remove male / female toilets, but would add gender neutral ones.

Chair moves to vote

Passes

Chair closes policy discussion due to time restraints and thanks all members for their contribution. Explains that policy ideas not discussed will be available on the website and members are encouraged to use the ‘upvote’ or ‘downvote’ buttons to determine the order of policy idea discussion at the next meeting.

Chair notes the next meeting of Council will be held on Wednesday 20th January from 1.30pm. Members are also informed that there will be an Annual General Meeting of the Union being held on 29th January and members will be provided with further information for both meetings in due course.