**Student Council Agenda 27.11.2019 – 2pm – 4pm**

**Ayr Room – Committee Room 1 –** 7 students **Lanarkshire Room – 3.0.11 –** 9 students **London Room – Room 1 –** 1 student  
**Paisley Room - G240 –** 25 students

1. Welcome and Introduction

This meeting was chaired by Dan Hutchison, as the Union Chair was unable to attend.

1. Minutes from Previous Meeting were approved.
2. Senior Management Question Time with Ehsan Mesbahi, Vice Principal

Q: The lockers for Biology at Lanarkshire campus are still unusable. Student were told it would be sorted in a couple of weeks (for lab coats) but this hasn’t happened. Can anything be done? They are standard Key locks, planning to change to combi but students have been asking since Sept.

1. *Ehsan will make sure it gets sorted asap, hopefully before Christmas and will chase this up.*

Q. Regarding the Engagement policy: if you don’t engage enough you get penalised but sometimes there are issues with recording and false non engagement notices. Some over faults with systems. Also some work is an indicator of engagement and may encourage student to over engage and have a negative impact on mental health issues. Why does the university use this flawed system?  
*A. The Education Advisory Committee discussed this at length. Presence is only one of many indicators of engagement. Engagement is a problem in terms of attrition in terms of losing students within the first year – UWS is one of the worst for this, which is taken seriously by the Scottish Funding Council and the government. This leads to external pressure to remotely and carefully monitor engagement with university to identify early signals of disengagement. The university knows some students get annoyed so there is a need to get the balance right. They try to correlate campus/course with other differences like distance to travel and try to assess triggers for engagement.*

*Ehsan asks to be contacted specifically regarding those areas of over engagement and the false non engagement notices.*

*Student experience is utmost priority and these systems are designed to help with that.*

*Ehsan asks how could we help you or those student at risk of non-completion.*

Q. Student points out high attrition potentially related to Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 20% and 40% quintiles. SIMD 20/40 and suggest identifying and pastoral care especially for those students. Mechanistic emails possibly push away, and aware this would take more work.  
*A. Data doesn’t show a tendency to leave related to SIMD 20/40, and we are proud of being an institution with high SIMD 20/40 students. This is also potentially a sensitive issue, so approaching students on that basis feels potentially challenging.*

*This is also related to the tutoring system at UWS – statistical analysis shows there’s more than 30 academics who have more than 80 students and 20/30 who have only one tutee each. Personal experience is everyone had tutees, and this system where even the principal and vice principals of the university have tutees, and that meetings happen one on one each term. Trying to change but has not yet worked, and the personal tutor system is not effectively implemented at UWS. This has been identified by the Enhancement Led Institutional Review team too and there is a desire to implement these changes at UWS.*

Q. In mechanical engineering there have been a lot of staff departures. There is an MEng rolling out next year but multiple staff departures and students are concerned with the future of the department. There’s really just one member of staff that students go to. Students may not want to choose the MEng without assurances that the department will be well staffed, are there any assurances you can give?  
*A. Students may be aware that we went to a rebalancing exercise and had to save some money, but did not impact the number of academics. However, there may have been an indirect impact of rebalancing and there are lots of costs that are not academic related. Turnover is also sometimes cyclical – before Research Excellent Framework (REF) headhunting for example. The question now is how we can now bring some of the saved money into reinvestment. There is reassurance that part of this is about strengthening engineering areas which have been identified as growth areas by the gov’t. There is a plan for growth with engineering as one of the top items. If you have immediate concerns – talk to Dan Hutchison (SAUWSVPEducation@uws.ac.uk) and keep informing how it’s going. The university would like to improve student staff ratio. Ideal is 18:1, currently at 23:1. That will be implemented within the next year or so.*

Q. Why don’t we have graduation caps at graduation ceremonies?  
*A. I don’t know! Ehsan studied in Newcastle and worked for them, and as an offshoot of Durham they didn’t wear caps to ensure differentiation between students.*

Q. The rumour was that it’s to do with health and safety.   
*A. That’s not true*

Q. Physics with Education is a course that is specifically attractive at UWS and is one of few courses which is across campus. Physics is taught at Paisley and Education at Ayr. The cost of travel from Paisley to Ayr before 9am is £14.80 which is a lot of money to be having to spend each day. Travel is once a week in third year and twice a week in fourth year, plus travelling to see teaching staff which adds up to a significant amount of money. Especially given the SIMD 20/40 population, what financial support is there?   
*A. At UWS we duplicate a lot of costs across 5 campuses – we spent £650,000 on staff travel 2 years ago and we try to stack timetables to minimise this issue.*

*Ehsan asks students: Do you think we are using enough technology? Like VC links? Student experience is key so the question is would the technology have a negative impact somewhere else? What’s your view?*

Student input: Agree it would make it a bit more difficult or students may not like it. At Ayr the use of tech seems like a good idea but quite ambitious and unreasonable. There are 2 MAC labs and neither work consistently – sometimes in a whole class and only 3 computers work, library computers don’t work and take 10-15 minutes to load up, and the WiFi doesn’t always work, especially in performance spaces. Need the groundwork and computing systems in place before doing it. Perhaps a lecture capture would better – maybe with proof if students have watched it? Technology may be 10 years down the line cos now we can’t have signal or printers. Is it possible to watch a lecture captcha from home? This would cut off the time and money taken to travel or hold a viewing party. Pushing technology at this stage seems really overambitious though!

*A. We don’t want lecture capture to negatively impact students and we don’t want distance and cost to negatively impact students. ITDS is not consistent at all campuses. Have to have some strategic plans. Going back to cost there is no budget for student travel though. However, Ehsan will investigate and get back to students via Dan.*

Q. There are policies suggested to student council regarding assignments, one about reducing the number of assignments and international students are being penalised for grammar or language issues in assignments. What is the current status of these issues?   
*A. Yes we over assess, in different shapes and form. More than 72% assignments are essays, even in engineering which is potentially the worst way of doing an assignment. Academics have a tendency to add in more assignments, but generally we want assignments to align and want them to be reduced. Ehsan recommends discussing with your lecturers, have frank observations and giving immediate feedback. Also students should not currently be penalised if it’s not a degree in English.*

*Questions for students from Ehsan:*

*Are students happy with captcha as general policy?  
Is the current tutor system effective?  
How could council help to improve NSS scores?*

*\*\*NOTE\*\* If any students would like to answer Ehsan’s questions or feedback please email your contributions to Dan at SAUWSVPEducation@uws.ac.uk*

1. University Corporate Strategy Update given by Gavin Lee

Grateful to student input so far and now the University are continuing to look at the new strategy. Looking at new 5 year plan and be ambitious. So far UWS have spoken to students throughout the process – and the focuses will be on quality teaching, teaching environments, and student support throughout uni time.

We want to share the document setting out principals and priorities – excellent learning and teaching, impactful portfolio, strong relationship with communities, and sustainability are priorities.

Next: Court saw a draft and endorsed it. Would welcome any comments and changes. Launching February/March time. Want to be having launch, so it’s not just a document on a website but is part of culture of uni and will be doing that in January.

ACTION: Any comments on the draft (sent to Student Reps) can be sent to [gavin.lee@uws.ac.uk](mailto:gavin.lee@uws.ac.uk).

4.a. Franklin updated student on the Students’ Union Strategic Plan: students at the meeting were asked to fill in a survey for our strategic plan. Also the union are are looking for people to be student and external trustees. Any trustees need to be approved by student council, so look out for any communications to do with that in the future!

1. Holding your Sabbatical Officers to Account – This was postponed due to Union Chair absence, and the
2. Policy Debates and Voting:

**43 students in attendance (1 London, 7 Ayr, 10 Lanarkshire, 25 Paisley) 22 needed to pass**

**2.a (2.o) Ensuring all vending machines offer card payments and/or on campus change giving**

Ayr – 0   
Lanarkshire - 10  
London - 1  
Paisley – 23

34 votes in favour: Passes

**2.b (2.f) Christmas Balls**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 6  
London - 0  
Paisley – 2

8 votes in favour: Fails

**2.c (2.j) Get an alcohol licence at Lanarkshire**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 10  
London - 0  
Paisley – 16

26 votes in favour: Passes

**2.d (2.g) Allow the Union bar to continue to be a safe space**

This policy had an amended version suggested on the website prior to council. After some discussion the council agreed that the amended version should be voted on. The amendment is as follows:

"The Association will implement a system where individuals can report songs which they or someone else find objectionable, and the Association will consider whether those songs are compatible with the Association being a safe space. Where a song is not compatible with the Association being a safe space it will be prohibited to be played or performed within SAUWS spaces. The Association will periodically publish a list of songs deemed to be objectionable as well as those complained of but not deemed objectionable, (but not of the identities or number of people who have reported said songs.) Any SAUWS member will have the right to challenge the decision to either ban or not ban any songs listed."

The council would like it noted that the Equality and Diversity committee may be the best place for these decisions to be made.

Ayr – 7  
Lanarkshire - 6  
London - 1  
Paisley – 9

23 votes in favour: passes

**2.e (2.h) Reduce Stress**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 10  
London - 1  
Paisley – 13

24 votes in favour: passes

**2.f (2.l) CCTV camera at all strategic lecture rooms and common rooms.**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 0   
London - 0  
Paisley – 0

0 votes in favour: fails

**2.g (2.p) Smoking**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 0  
London - 0  
Paisley – 0

0 fails

**2.h (2.q) Eco cups at the Union**

Ayr – 6  
Lanarkshire - 9  
London - 0  
Paisley – 7

22 votes in favour: Passes

**2.i (2.m) Too many assignments**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 0  
London - 0  
Paisley – 0

0 votes in favour: Fails

**2.j (2.b) Let international students Put they are International in their assessments**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 0  
London - 0  
Paisley – 0

0 votes in favour: Fails

**2.k (2.k) Prayer Room**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 0  
London - 0  
Paisley – 1

1 vote in favour: fails

**2.l (2.i) Is Paisley canteen environmental friendly? +6/6**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 0  
London - 1  
Paisley – 12

13 votes in favour: fails

**2.m – I.T. Facilities need reviewed at Paisley Campus Library** and **Student Resources**

These were debated together due to the similarity of content

Ayr – 7  
Lanarkshire - 10  
London - 1  
Paisley – 22

40 votes in favour - passes

**2.n (2.e) Ayr Student Union Opening Hours**

Ayr – 0  
Lanarkshire - 2  
London - 0  
Paisley – 1

3 votes in favour - fails

**2.o (2.n) Improvements in Ayr Catering Facilities**

Ayr – 7  
Lanarkshire - 0  
London - 0  
Paisley – 5

12 votes in favour – fails

**2.p (2.d) All UWS campuses to campaign for White ribbon status**

Ayr – 7  
Lanarkshire - 10  
London - 1  
Paisley – 22

40 votes in favour – passes