

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST STUDENTS' UNION**MINUTES**

Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council
held on 29 April 2013 in The Space, Level 1, Students' Union

Present:

Aaron Cooney (Open)
Aaron McGuinness (School Rep, Nursing and Midwifery)
Aidan Bannon (Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, MHLS)
Aidan Hughes (Executive Management Committee, EMC , EMC)
Aidan McGrinder (MHLS)
Aisling Gallagher (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, AHSS)
Alexander Arrell (AHSS)
Alexander Redpath (Postgraduate, PG)
Andrew Carruthers (AHSS)
Aoibhin McNeill (Engineering and Physical Sciences, EPS)
Aoife Boyle (PG)
Bobby Kane (Open)
Brendan Reid (School Rep, Maths and Physics)
Brian Mahon (PG)
Catherine Madden (School Rep, Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work)
Cathy Corbett (EPS)
Christopher Gault (MHLS)
Christopher Smyth (EPS)
Connor Daly (EMC)
Cormac Kerr (AHSS)
Daniel Hogan (EPS)
Denise McKeegan (MHLS)
Derek Crosby (PG)
Eoin Deeney (PG)
Eoin McGarrity (AHSS)
Eoin McMullan (Open)
Fergal McFerran (Open First Year)
Fiachra O'Maolcraoibhe (Open)
Frank Taggart (School Rep, Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science)
Gary Spedding (MHLS)
Gerard McGuigan (AHSS)
Gilbert Rice (MHLS)
James Mills (PG)
James Surgenor (School Rep, Creative Arts)
Jamie Pow (AHSS)
Jason O'Neill (EMC)
Jason Sime (AHSS)
Jessica Kirk (EMC)
Jonathan Buckley (AHSS)
Kerrie McConnell (MHLS)
Kevin Cassidy (MHLS)
Khor Ching Vei [Luke] (EPS)
Lauren Brown (Open)
Matthew Hunt (School Rep, Law)
Matthew O'Connor (AHSS)
Meghan Rafferty (Open)
Neale Watson (School Rep, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering)
Niall Bole (EPS)
Niall McShane (EMC)
Nicole McShane (School Rep, Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology)
Nuala McAdams (EMC)
Orry Robinson (EPS)
Paul Fletcher (MHLS)
Paul Walsh (EPS)
Peter Agnew (EPS)
Peter Canavan (AHSS)
Rebecca Hall (School Rep, History and Anthropology)
Rebecca Murray (School Rep, English)
Ruairdhri McIlroy (AHSS)
Sarah-Louise Baird (AHSS)
Sky Aughey (Open First Year)
Tara Pouryahya (MHLS)
Tony Houston (AHSS)
Tyler McNally (AHSS)

In Attendance:

Dominic Doherty (Clerk of Council)
Damien Corridan (Deputy Clerk of Council)
Thom Hinds (Further Education and Union Development Officer)

778. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from the following Councillors:

Anthony McKee (Open First Year)
Ciaran McKinley (PG)
Gareth Calvert (Open First Year)
Joanne O'Neill (EMC)
Tiernan McAteer (AHSS)

779. MINUTES OF THE STATUTORY MEETING OF 20 MARCH 2013

It was agreed that the minutes of the Statutory Meeting of Wednesday 20 March 2013 (SUC/M/13/2) were a true and accurate record of proceedings.

780. BUSINESS ARISING

There was none.

781. COMMUNICATIONS

781.1 Council noted that issues arising from the recent Union of Students' in Ireland (USI) Congress will be considered at the Annual Business Meeting of Council.

781.2 Council noted that Councillor Derek Crosby had failed to attend a meeting of the Community Equality and Diversity Committee without sending apologies and therefore was deemed to have resigned his seat on the Committee.

Derek Crosby appealed this decision stating that he had been otherwise distracted by his studies. Council upheld the appeal.

781.3 Council noted that Councillor Jennifer Lau had failed to attend a meeting of the Community Equality and Diversity Committee without sending apologies and therefore was deemed to have resigned her seat on the Committee.

781.4 Council noted that a Students' Union staff member was present to provide live updates of the proceedings of Council via Twitter and a new Students' Union blog.

781.5 Council noted that Josh Duddy (Engineering and Physical Sciences) is deemed to have resigned his seat due to non-attendance.

782. BYE-ELECTIONS

The Chair invited nominations to the following positions:

782.1 Community Equality and Diversity Committee (1 vacancy)

There were no candidates proposed and the Returning Officer deemed the seat to be vacant.

783. ELECTIONS

783.1 The Council noted that:

An Election Court was convened on Thursday 11 April 2013 to consider the alleged irregularity stated within a submitted Election Petition, in accordance with Rule 2, Section 11 of the Students' Union Constitution.

The Election Petition alleged that an irregularity occurred on the afternoon of Tuesday 5 March 2013, specifically claiming that Rule 2, Section 9.33 of the Students' Union Constitution was contravened:

Should any circumstances arise in an Election which is not covered by this Rule or Constitution as a whole, the Returning Officer shall issue a written determination on the matter. Such a determination shall have the same standing as a Rule and shall be effective for that Election only. The Executive Management Committee shall, as soon as possible after the Election is over, bring forward new regulations through the Elections Regulations Committee to cover such a circumstance in the future.

The Students' Union Constitution, Rule 2, Section 11.4 states that:

In considering an Election (or Referendum or Plebiscite) Petition, the Election (or Referendum or Plebiscite) Court shall consider whether the alleged irregularity has, or may have occurred and whether it could have materially affected the result of the Election (or Referendum or Plebiscite) and the Court shall, at its discretion, declare the Election (or Referendum or Plebiscite) valid or invalid. The Court may also, at its discretion, invoke the University's Student Conduct Regulations against any Student whom the Court believes to be guilty of misconduct.

The Election Court has determined that:

- The petition is upheld.
- An irregularity may have occurred; specifically, that an attempt may have been made to interfere with the voting intention of students, by means of restricting the availability of open access computers in the foyer of the Peter Froggatt Centre (PFC) on the afternoon of Tuesday 5 March 2013.
- There is insufficient evidence to verify the nature of the above irregularity.
- The alleged irregularity that may have occurred did not materially affect the result of the Election.
- The Elections to the Executive Management Committee are therefore declared to be valid.

The Election Court recommends to the Executive Management Committee that the current Election Rules be reviewed, with particular reference to the

absence of detailed Regulations concerning the use of online voting and electronic communications methods.

The Election Court, in the course of its investigation, uncovered evidence of activity by an individual, which may constitute a contravention of the University's Security Policies in relation to information security, the acceptable use of computer resources, the use of computer systems and Data Protection. The Election Court has agreed to refer this matter for further investigation under the University's Student Conduct Regulations.

784. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS / RULES AMENDMENTS

784.1 Proposed Recognition of New Clubs and Societies

Council was requested to amend Rule 8, Paragraph 820 in order to recognise the following proposed Clubs and Societies:

Queen's University Belfast Derry City FC Supporters' Club

Proposer: Gary Roberts (40061528)
 Seconder: Ciaran McCallion (40063465)

Queen's University Belfast Hong Kong Society

Proposer: Jeremy Chun Yu Chan (40077511)
 Seconder: Alvin Yiu Chun Lee (40098178)

Queen's University Belfast Waterski and Wakeboard Club

Proposer: Nico Sweeney-Ortis (40038690)
 Seconder: Katy Fair (40037183)

It was noted that all of the above had provided all of the stipulated documentation, which was available for inspection upon request.

Recognition of the Queen's University Belfast Derry City FC Supporters' Club was approved following appropriate discussion and some minor clarifications by a representative of this group.

Recognition of the Queen's University Belfast Hong Kong Society was approved following appropriate discussion and some minor clarifications by a representative of this group.

Recognition of the Queen's University Belfast Waterski and Wakeboard Club was deferred.

784.2 Proposed Amendment of Rule 4

Amend: Rule 4, by adding:

8.10 Shall organise an LGBT awareness campaign of events during the month of February to highlight issues of inequality experienced by the LGBT community.

Proposer: Jessica Kirk (40021065)
 Seconder: Peter Agnew (40030191)

Jessica Kirk, moving the amendment, stated that the purpose of the proposal was to formalise the support that the Vice President Equality and Diversity provides to the LGBT Society and ensure that the work is continued into the future.

Aidan McGrinder, opposing the amendment, stated that the amendment was a good idea in principle, but it was improper for the VP Equality and Diversity to be obliged to provide increased support to one student group over another, and that he would support a motion that gave equal support to all groups on campus.

Aidan McGrinder, accepted a point of information from Matthew O'Conner, who stated that the LGBT Society has been supported for years and this would formalise the current arrangements, rather than changing them.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. A display of voting cards indicated that 47 Councillors were in favour; this proposed amendment to the Constitutional Rules was therefore accepted.

784.3 Proposed Amendment of Rule 5

Amend: Rule 5:

Add at end of 1.1 and also at end of 1.9:

“Environmental and Ethical Committee”

Add:

“8. THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND ETHICAL COMMITTEE

- 8.1 The remit of the Environmental and Ethical Committee, as delegated by the Council, will be:
 - 8.1.1 To address, organise and campaign on environmental and ethical issues, within the Union, University and wider world.
 - 8.1.2 These issues include, but are not limited to, human rights, ethical investment, ethical purchasing and procurement, sustainable development and environmentalism.
- 8.2 The membership of the Environmental and Ethical Committee shall be ten elected members with voting rights.
- 8.3 In addition to the ordinary membership of the Committee, as outlined above in 8.2, the Committee shall be chaired by the Union President (or nominee).”

Proposer: Nicole McShane (40040463)
 Seconder: Jenny Lau (40029033)

Nicole McShane, moving the amendment, stated that the proposal had previously been considered by Council and that the purpose of the amendment was to formalise the position of the Environmental Committee in the Constitution.

Alex Redpath, opposing the amendment, stated that this role already falls under the remit of the Vice President Clubs and Societies and that an additional Committee of Council with ten members on it would never be filled, due to each Councillor being limited to sitting on two Committees of Council.

Alex Redpath, accepted a point of information from Niall Bole, who stated that environmental issues were not under the remit of any officer.

Alex Redpath stated that responsibility of these issues should be allocated by the Executive Management Committee.

Niall McShane, supporting the amendment, stated that he had taken over responsibility for these issues from the former Vice President Welfare and that the Special Committee had been quite successful - supporting Green Impact initiatives, and seeking additional water fountains on campus.

A proposal to proceed to the vote was accepted and Ms McShane waived her right to summarise.

A display of voting cards, following a recount, indicated that 47 Councillors were in favour; this proposed amendment to the Constitutional Rules was therefore accepted.

785. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Report of the Union President (**SUC/P/13/20**)

Report of the Vice President Welfare (**SUC/P/13/21**)

Report of the Vice President Education (**SUC/P/13/22**)

Report of the Vice President Equality and Diversity (**SUC/P/13/23**)

Report of the Vice President Campaigns and Communications (**SUC/P/13/24**)

Report of the Vice President Community (**SUC/P/13/25**)

Report of the Vice President Clubs and Societies (**SUC/P/13/26**)

785.1 Report of the Union President (SUC/P/13/20)

The Union President highlighted a number of matters, including:

- That issues relating the delegate Aisling Gallagher at the USI Congress 2013 shall be considered at the Annual Business Meeting of Council.
- That a consultation process will begin regarding the overall approach of the Union to national conferences.
- Recent University moves to seek to reduce the Institutional Bursary and Student Experience Bursary, to fund widening participation activities and increased numbers of students availing of bursaries – the Union President stated that Union’s objection to any decrease in the bursary.

- Issues regarding the charging of fees for 'full-time part-time' students, which have been raised with the Director of Finance.

In response to a query from Niall Bole regarding who exactly agreed mandates for USI Congress, the Union President stated that policy is set by Council, which elected student officers have to abide by, and that the Executive Management Committee agreed that all delegates shall be bound by Union policy, as otherwise the Union has no collective power if those representing it do not abide by its policies.

In response to a query from Orry Robinson regarding the reduction in bursaries, the Union President stated that they are likely to be reduced but that any change will affect new students only.

In response to a query from Aisling Gallagher regarding the process for dealing with issues arising from USI Congress, the Union President stated that a number of courses of action had been discussed, with a view to offering Aisling Gallagher an avenue to appeal any decision, but on reflection it was more appropriate for Council to consider this matter.

In response to a query from Gary Spedding regarding the failure of the Executive Management Committee to bring mandates to Council, the Union President stated that Council was the main decision making body of the Union and that the purpose of the EMC decision was to ensure that delegates did not vote contrary to policy as agreed by Council.

In response to a query from Aisling Gallagher regarding the authority of EMC to enforce a mandate, the Union President stated elected representatives were required to act in accordance with Union policy, that prior to this year there were not even elections to national union delegations – though ideally elections would be held earlier in the year to increase involvement with national union issues and a more formalised process for agreeing mandates could be investigated.

In response to a query from Tyler McNally concerning the Union's policy on abortion and its allowance for individual views on the matter, the Union President stated that delegates had to represent the views of all students.

In response to a query from Brian Mahon concerning the notice given to delegates about mandates, the Union President stated that all were informed prior to each national conference.

Paper SUC/P/13/20 approved.

785.2 Report of the Vice President Welfare (SUC/P/13/21)

The Vice President's report was taken as read.

Paper SUC/P/13/21 approved.

785.3 Report of the Vice President Education (SUC/P/13/22)

The Vice President highlighted a number of matters, including:

- The brevity of her report, due to the Easter break and sick leave.

- The winners of the inaugural Education Awards:
 - Course Representative of the year (AHSS) - John Anthony Russell
 - Best Feedback - Dr. Lesley-Anne Hanna
 - Course Representative of the year (MHLS) - Nathan Cantley
 - Most Involved - Danielle McConville
 - Course Representative of the year (EPS) - Frank Taggart
 - Linked In - Lorna Dysart
 - Peer Mentor of the Year - Laura Boyle
 - Best Personal Tutor - Dr. Chris Gibbons
 - Most Inspiring/ Motivating - Dr. Keith Breen
 - School Representative of the Year - Neale Watson
 - Special Recognition Award - Jacqueline O'Hare

Frank Taggart, on behalf of Council, congratulated the Vice President on the success of the event.

Paper SUC/P/13/22 approved.

785.4 Report of the Vice President Equality and Diversity (SUC/P/13/23)

The Vice President's report was taken as read.

Paper SUC/P/13/23 approved.

785.5 Report of the Vice President Campaigns and Communications (SUC/P/13/24)

The Vice President's report was taken as read.

In response to a query from Matthew O'Connor concerning plans to introduce a new Union website, the Vice President stated that he was currently reviews various options.

Paper SUC/P/13/24 approved.

785.6 Report of the Vice President Community (SUC/P/13/25)

The Vice President's report was taken as read.

The Vice President highlighted a number of matters, including:

- That this was his final Council meeting, due to annual leave the following week.
- His thanks to all those involved in the Union, including Councillors – for their passion and commitment to students.
- His thanks to the sabbatical officers that he has served with.

Matthew O'Connor, on behalf of Council, thanked the Vice President for his enormous efforts in the Vice President Community role.

In response to a query from the Union President regarding the great successes of Are Ye Well? and QUB's Got Talent, the Vice President stated that, though both were successes, both were different types of event and both were continually improving and evolving.

Paper SUC/P/13/25 approved.

785.7 Report of the Vice President Clubs and Societies (SUC/P/13/26)

The Union Speaker notified Council that the report of the Vice President had not been submitted to the Clerk of Council within the timeframe set down in the Standing Orders and was thus considered to be rejected by Council, subject to right of appeal to Council.

The Vice President requested that Council consider his report, apologising for the delay and stating that a wide variety of work commitments had prevented him from submitting his report within the necessary timeframe.

A display of voting cards indicated that Council assented to consider the report of the Vice President.

The Vice President highlighted the following matters:

- That SWOT won the Society of the Year at the Board of Irish College Societies awards.
- That Queen's had many students and student activities shortlisted for the USI Student Achievement Awards.
- Efforts were on-going to deliver the SU Awards on 1 May 2013.

Paper SUC/P/13/26 approved.

786. REPORTS FROM OTHER UNION COMMITTEES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

There were none.

787. REPORTS FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES.

There were none.

788. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS.

There were none.

789. QUESTIONS.

Tabled to the Union President

789.1 Can the Union President provide any explanation for the sudden outsourcing of jobs within the Students' Union without consulting the membership or the governing body of the Students' Union – Student Council?

Proposer: Gary Spedding (40046946)

Seconder: Thom Hinds (40066142)

The Union President stated that the decision was in April 2011 due to the decision to collapse the post of Security Coordinator in the Union, to outsource the management of security and to outsource the current provision.

The Union President noted that:

- This decision affects 18 casual staff, only 50% of whom are current students, with over 60% of hours worked going to non-student staff.
- All staff affected have been offered jobs with a third party provider.
- All staff requiring up-skilling have been offered free SIA training.
- Plans are being put in place to increase the number of student jobs in the Union.
- The security contract will be managed by a third party provider, as at present, there is no skilled management structure in place to manage security in the Union.
- This proposal is sustainable in the long term for the Union.
- The external provider is committed to hiring students.

The Union President accepted a point of information from Niall Bole, who stated that he was on Management Board and the Executive Management Committee when the decision was purported to be made, and no such decision was made to outsource student jobs. He further stated that 90% of casual security staff are students or graduate students who have not yet been able to secure alternate employment – no decision was made to outsource these jobs, just to outsource the management of security.

The Union President noted that the Union was not here to put students out of jobs, but security had to be managed and that was best done by an expert external contractor.

The Union President accepted a point of information from Bobby Kane, who stated that he was offered the opportunity to sign a contract – a zero-hours contract – but was not offered a job with guaranteed hours.

The Union President stated that:

- All current casual staff would be offered the same, if not better, terms with the external security provider and would also have opportunities to work at other venues in Northern Ireland.
- No one would lose their job.
- No one will lose hours.

The Union speaker received a proposal to suspend standing orders for 15 minutes to discuss the issue of outsourcing security from Cathy Corbett.

Cathy Corbett, moving the proposal, stated that Council needed more time to discuss this matter.

Jason O'Neill, opposing the proposal, stated that he only had limited information about the issue to hand and it would be more appropriate to convene another meeting to discuss this matter, when he could have more information to hand.

Following a show of voting cards, the proposal was deemed to have fallen.

Gary Spedding, in a supplementary question, enquired as to why the President is not telling the truth about the outsourcing of jobs – nothing that a zero hours contract is not a job.

The Union President stated that he would ensure that no one would lose their job as a result of the engagement of an external security provider and that it is possible for staff to have even more employment opportunities arising from this.

The Union President accepted a point of information from Paul Fletcher, who stated that:

- He was a current member of Management Board and any time issues regarding the future of security were raised, he was told that changes would only be made 'down the line', with no time limit set in place.
- His contract was now being terminated in the middle of his examination period.

The Union President responded that the appropriate place to raise issues relating to a contract was with a line manager – not at Council, and that the decision would lead to a better service to students and not jobs would be lost.

789.2 In your written message at the start of the ratified Strategic Plan 2012-15, you clearly state that a key priority will be on putting money in students pockets and the Students' Union will achieve this by promoting and offering part-time job opportunities. Can you explain exactly how you are putting money in students' pockets by disfranchising students through cutting jobs held by students in our Students' Union?

Proposer: Gary Spedding (40046946)

Seconder: Thom Hinds (40066142)

The Union President stated that plans are being put in place to increase the number of student job opportunities in the Union, which provides even for those who do not get involved in the political activity of the Union, and the commercial partners working in the Union also provide job opportunities for students.

Gary Spedding, in a supplementary question, enquired as to what level of guarantee can be given that the current employees of the Union will have their pay and hours protected.

The Union President stated that:

- The external contractor would be working for the Union, who will set performance targets, including the number of students working for them.
- That there was not ideological issue with transferring the jobs to the external provider.
- The external provider is happy to take on current Students' Union staff and to offer them the same pay and hours as before.
- There is no ulterior motive to the transfer of security.
- Specific staffing issues should be raised with the relevant line manger.

The Union President accepted a point of information from Matthew O'Conner, who stated that decisions of Management Board should be communicated to Council.

The Union President stated that Management Board makes many operational decisions and Council is not the best place to discuss specific operational issues.

790. MOTIONS.

790.1 This Students' Union recognises International Women's Day and the important contribution that women make to society across the globe.

This Council recognises the horrendous discrimination faced by girls across the world before they are even born. This Students' Union is opposed to any suggestion that a women's life is any less than that of a man.

We recognise the shameful record of statistics that show the sheer scale of this inequality. Infanticide and the aborting of unborn female foetuses should be condemned and are a result of countries failing to protect the most vulnerable in their society. The devastating social effects of gender imbalance are undisputed. In many societies such as China and India, women are perceived as subservient because of their role as carer and homemakers, whilst men are predominately perceived to ensure the family's social and economic stability. Female Infanticide and female foeticide are significant issues in China and India as a result of the patriarchal nature of society.

This Students' Union calls upon the international community and the United Nations to condemn the abortion and infanticide of female children and to take action to educate and change the beliefs of society to appreciate the worth of a female life.

Proposer: Cathy Corbett (40025334)
 Seconder: Chris Smyth (40060508)

Council noted that the proposer of this motion had requested that this motion be withdrawn and not be considered by Council.

790.2 Council proposes that a Referendum be staged on Thursday 9 May 2013, in order to ratify those amendments to the Students' Union Constitution and its Rules that have been approved by the Council during its 2012-13 session.

Proposer: Jason O'Neill (Union President)
 Seconder: Niall McShane (Vice President Clubs and Societies)

Jason O'Neill, moving the motion, stated that this motion shall enable the ratification of amendments approved by Council.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. A display of voting cards, indicated that 48 Councillors were in favour; the motion was carried.

790.3 Council notes that 3rd Year Dissertations make up an important part of an undergraduate degree – in some instances, accounting for 20 per cent of the overall degree classification, and that it is the responsibility of an individual student's Supervisor to offer advice, support and guidance to the students whom they have agreed to supervise.

Council recognises that certain members of staff have a range of other responsibilities, but that student support for the dissertation should be placed as a priority. Over recent weeks, it has become clear that some members of staff have not been giving this responsibility the attention that it deserves and this has therefore led to a disparity in the progress of students on an important piece of work.

Council calls for academic staff to ensure that individual students whose work they have agreed to supervise are given priority and receive the support and advice that they need.

Proposer: Jason Sime (40038969)
 Seconder: Sky Aughey (40079675)

Jason Sime, moving the motion, stated that the quality of supervision varied quite considerably in the University and it is important that the Union take on this issue as outlined in the motion.

Jason Sime accepted a point of information from Rebecca Hall, who stated that it is the responsibility of students to make contact with supervisors and not the other way around.

Frank Taggart, opposing the motion, stated that this issue should be brought up at SSCC and School level, rather than at an institutional level, as adequate institutional policies exist in this area.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

790.4 Council notes the lack of policy in the area of Cyber-bullying. Given the increased use of social media, there are more risks for young people to become targets or victims and even aggressors of Cyber-bullying. There is a lack of awareness and understanding on the topic of Cyber-bullying.

Council therefore proposes that this Union adopts the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) Cyber-bullying Policy;
http://issuu.com/theusi/docs/cyber_bullying_guide_2

Council furthermore instructs the Vice President Welfare to:

- Adopt and promote a Cyber-Bullying Charter
- Participate in the training module which is being developed by USI
- Work towards ensuring all officers, SU staff and student representatives are appropriately trained and informed in relation to the issue
- Ensure that information and resources on the identification, prevention, reporting and response of cyber-bullying are made available and promoted

- To work with USI in promoting their Cyber Bulling campaign, 'Think Before you Type'

Proposer: Aidan Hughes, EMC (40007557)
 Seconder: Nuala McAdams, EMC (14718073)

Aidan Hughes, moving the motion, stated that, though he was not the biggest fan of USI, he commended their work in the area of cyber-bullying as it is a big issue on campuses and the Union should be taking a lead on educating students on the negative aspects of social media.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

790.5 Council notes the following:

- Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher died on 8/4/13 due to a stroke.
- That there has been a variety of responses to her death.

Council further notes:

- Queen's University Belfast planned to fly its flag at half mast on 17 April 2013.
- The 'Regulations for Flying the University Standard and Acknowledging Deaths' states that the flag should be flown at half mast following the death of "members of Senate, members of staff, students, former Chancellors, former Vice-Chancellors and distinguished persons for whom flags would be flown at half mast on other institutions in the City".

Council believes:

- That the decision to fly the flag on 17 April 2013 falls in line with the decision taken by Belfast City Council, which is why Queen's feels that the decision is not theirs to make.
- Furthermore, as Margaret Thatcher was a particularly divisive politician in relation to Northern Ireland, flying the flag is grossly offensive and insensitive towards many students, members of staff, and the wider community around Queen's.

Council instructs the Executive Management Committee to propose amending the flag regulations by removing the "distinguished persons for whom flags would be flown at half-mast on other institutions in the city" section of the regulation in order to avoid future controversies.

Proposer: Derek Crosby (40006101)
 Seconder: Aisling Gallagher (40055120)

Derek Crosby, moving the motion, stated that, in the current environment, it was ridiculous that Queen's was held hostage the whims of City Hall with regard to when the University flag is flown at half-mast, noting that the 'flegs' situation is sufficient evidence that City Hall should not dictate what the

University does with its own flag. Mr Crosby further stated that this Union takes a neutral position on divisive issues such as abortion, so it should logically support a neutral position on flying the flag with respect to controversial individuals, such as Baroness Thatcher.

Chris Smyth, opposing the motion, stated that following the lead of City Hall is an equitable solution and that policies such as this should not be based on the death of an individual.

Frank Taggart, speaking on the motion, stated that it was unclear if the University was bound by just City Hall or also by Stormont.

Frank Taggart, accepted a point of information from Aisling Gallagher, who stated that the Regulations referred to civic buildings in Belfast City.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

790.6 Council notes:

- (i) Women, LGBT, black and disabled students face extra barriers throughout their education. They are faced with everyday cultural and institutional discrimination due to their gender / sexual orientation / disability / race.
- (ii) NUS has four autonomous liberation campaigns with autonomous liberation officers, specifically mandated to represent and work for the students who define into their liberation campaign.
- (iii) In addition to this, each liberation campaign holds an annual conference, where self-defining students can come together, meet activists from across the UK, vote for their national officer, and debate policy.
- (iv) The support and solidarity from liberation campaigns cannot and should not be undermined. These students face particular barriers and it is the duty of QUBSU to ensure they are both represented and included within our Union.

Council further notes:

- (i) That 2013 was the first year that QUBSU decided to send students to both the Disabled Students' Conference and the LGBT Conference.
- (ii) Attendance at these kinds of conferences is crucial if we are to work towards making our campus a safe and inclusive space for those who are systematically under represented within QUBSU.

Council instructs:

- (i) The Executive Management Committee (EMC) to ensure that at least one self-defining member of the student body is elected to be a delegate to each liberation conference via Queen's Online every year.

- (ii) The EMC to work towards encouraging black, disabled, women and LGBT students to stand for election; and to ensure that at least one student is sent as a delegate to each conference.

Proposer: Aisling Gallagher (40055120)
Seconder: Jessica Kirk (40021065)

Aisling Gallagher, moving the motion, stated that it was important to send students to liberation conferences as students who face discrimination daily need to be able to organise, to meet with fellow activists, find support mechanisms, empower themselves and work in solidarity with students on a national level.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

- 790.7 Council notes with concern that upon publication of the 2013 second semester examination timetable a number of students across campus appear to have examinations with unacceptably short time between them.

Council firmly believes that Students must be given appropriate decompression time (breathing room) between examinations as students can become stressed if there is an inadequate time for different sets of revision to commence.

Council further believes that an adequate time period between examinations must be a minimum of 48 hours for all students.

Council resolves that the Executive Management Committee be instructed to lobby the university as a matter of urgency to have examination timetables adequately reflect the needs of students on campus who require a space of at least 48 hours between examination sittings.

Council further resolves that students should be given access to draft timetables far earlier and be consulted with in conjunction with the Students' Union and the University staff in order to allow changes to be suggested in an adequate timeframe.

Proposer: Gary Spedding (40046946)
Seconder: Fergal McFerran (40043035)

Gary Spedding, moving the motion, stated that it was detrimental to student welfare and student academic performance when exams are timetabled closely together and that Council needed enhanced policy in this area.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

790.8 Council notes that there are a number of different catering outlets around the University which offer various options for Students, but have a substantially lower number of vegetarian and vegan options than is required by students.

Council believes that profit should not be grounds for discrimination against minority groups.

Council further believes that other groups should be catered for, including those requiring Kosher and Halal menu choices.

Council recognises the health benefits of vegetarian and vegan choices for our students and that there is potential to combine a wider range of vegetarian and vegan options with the Union organising opportunities for students to learn about cooking and healthy eating.

Council resolves that the Executive Management Committee should ensure that, where possible, the Students' Union Shop and all eateries within Students' Union premises provide a reasonable range of options that include vegan, vegetarian, Halal and Kosher foods.

Proposer: Gary Spedding (40046946)
 Seconder: Bobby Kane (40007854)

Gary Spedding, moving the motion, stated that there are very limited vegan, vegetarian, halal and kosher options available on campus and that this was disfranchising for students.

Gary Spedding, accepted a point of information from Frank Taggart, who stated that it was unclear as to the range of options on campus.

Cathy Corbett, opposing the motion, stated that, as someone with food intolerances, she did not see the sustainability of providing such a wide range of option in catering outlets on campus and that such offerings would be available if there was demand for them.

Aisling Gallagher, supporting the motion, stated that begin a vegetarian was not a disease, despite how some people viewed it and that vegetarian options can be eaten by omnivores, while the opposite is not true.

Aisling Gallagher, accepted a point of information from James Surgenor, who stated that there could be an additional cost to the Union as a result of this motion.

Aisling Gallagher, stated that it was misconception that vegetarian food was more expensive to produce than meat-based food.

A friendly amendment was accepted by the proposer, to replace the third paragraph with the following:

“Council further believes that other groups should be catered for, including those requiring Kosher, Halal and gluten-free menu choices.”

Neale Watson, opposing the motion, stated that survey should be performed first, to determine demand for any change in food offering.

Frank Taggart, speaking on the motion, stated that it was unclear if unused food in the Union incurs a cost to the Union.

Frank Taggart, accepted a point of information from Fergal McFerran, who stated that all SU Shop food was sold on a 'sale or return' basis.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed.

Gary Spedding, summarising in support, stated that the Students' Union should sell food for all students, should consult on demand and give students choice.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

790.9 Council notes that there are a number of Syrian students currently studying at Queen's University Belfast. At least three QUB students are Syrian government-sponsored under the British Council Capacity Building Scheme and have either had or are at risk of having their funding stopped.

Council further notes that Syrian students may face expulsion due to non-payment of their tuition fees; consequently, they face deportation as their student visas would thusly become invalid.

Council recognises that should these students return to Syria, they may risk detention, torture and assassination; all whose courses are truncated, face financial penalties from their government.

Council deplors the possibility that Syrian students face immediate expulsion from Northern Irish institutions if, due to the conflict, either they or their sponsors can no longer pay their tuition fees.

Council believes that it is the duty of the Students' Union to represent and support all student members and resolves to lobby the Northern Ireland Assembly to ensure that Syrian students are supported financially and otherwise to facilitate the completion of their studies.

Council further resolves to lobby Queen's University Belfast to:

- a. Waive or reduce all fees or defer payment deadlines for all affected Syrian students, whether sponsored or privately funded.
- b. Provide adequate welfare provisions, welfare grants, bursaries and scholarships for these students.
- c. Not transfer liability for tuition fees from the Syrian government to sponsored students personally.
- d. Provide counselling services free of charge for students wishing to talk about their situation in confidence.

Council further resolves that Northern Irish universities should not make any Syrian student sponsored by the Syrian government personally liable for their tuition fees but should register their tuition fees debts against the Syrian authorities and should also allow any Syrian students who have already been

forced to suspend their studies to return and complete their degrees and have access to the necessary financing to cover living expenses.

Council moreover resolves to work with NUS, NUS-USI and USI to lobby Foreign Secretaries William Hague and Eamon Gilmore to extend the same gesture to Syrian students as they did Libyan students affected by the conflict in 2011 who were able to continue their studies.

Finally, Council instructs the Executive Management Committee, in particular the Students' Union President and Vice-President Campaigns and Communications, to carry forward this policy robustly and to encourage NUS-USI and students' unions throughout Northern Ireland to lobby Universities and mission groups such as the Russell Group, 1994 Group, University Alliance, and Million+ to permit Syrian students to complete their studies and to highlight this issue through campaigns, resolutions and student-led media.

Proposer: Gary Spedding (40046946)
 Seconder: Joanne O'Neill (VP Welfare)

Gary Spedding, moving the motion, stated that there was nothing in this motion that Council should not support and its purpose was to protect vulnerable students and ensure that they have a future, despite all the efforts of the regime of their home country.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

790.10 Council notes with deep concern that Israeli conscientious objector Natan Blanc, 19, was sentenced to prison for the ninth time on Thursday 18th April 2013 for refusing to be drafted into the Israeli Defence Forces

Council recognises the fundamental right of Israelis to declare their refusal to be conscripted into the Israeli Military.

Council firmly supports Israeli citizens, who as both citizens of the Israeli State and moral human beings, believe they have a duty to refuse participation in the Israeli military.

Council believes that all human beings have the right to refuse military service if they so decide.

Council extends a message of solidarity to Natan Blanc and Mandates the Executive Management Committee to write a letter on behalf of our Students' Union to Natan Blanc at his address in Military Prison and via email to his inbox.

Proposer: Gary Spedding (40046946)
 Seconder: Daniel Hogan (40075047)

Gary Spedding, moving the motion, stated that it was important to show solidarity with those who are forced into conscription, especially those who are unable to undertake programmes of study as a result of conscription.

Mr Spedding further stated that Mr Blanc was in a situation beyond his control and that any letter to him should be circulated beforehand.

Neale Watson, opposing the motion, stated that it was not appropriate for Council to be discussing these issues.

Brian Mahon, speaking on the motion, stated that he has attended more than 70 council-type meetings in university and that he wished that we could have more variety in the nature of the motions brought to student councils.

Aisling Gallagher, supporting the motion, stated that Mr Blanc can't be a student as he is being detained against his will in prison and those who are free should use their voice to defend those who are not.

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed.

Gary Spedding, summarising in support, stated that this would be a contribution to a global effort to show solidarity with Mr Blanc.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

790.11 This Council calls upon the Union President to call a special open meeting to discuss the outsourcing of this Union's security before 10 May 2013. In attendance should be representatives of the Executive Management Committee so that all questions and concerns can be answered fully to the satisfaction of all in attendance.

Proposer: Cathy Corbett (40025334)
Seconder: Chris Smyth (40060508)

Cathy Corbett, moving the motion, stated that it was important this all the uncertainties surrounding this issue be clarified.

A friendly amendment by Gary Spedding was accepted by the proposer, to add the following paragraph to the end of the motion:

"The meeting shall have minutes recorded."

A friendly amendment by Orry Robinson was accepted by the proposer, to amend the final paragraph as follows:

"The meeting shall have minutes recorded and shall be chaired by the Union Speaker."

A proposal to move to the vote was agreed and the proposer of the motion waived the right to summarise. Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

791. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

There was none.

792. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Union Speaker announced that the Annual Business Meeting of the Students' Union Council shall take place on Tuesday 7 May 2013 at 6.00 p.m. in The Space, Students' Union.

Damien Corridan
Deputy Clerk to Students' Union Council