

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST STUDENTS' UNION

MINUTES

Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council
held on 10 February 2014 in The Space, Level 1, Students' Union

Present:

Aaron Blair (School Representative – Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering)
Andrew Carruthers (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, AHSS, in the Chair)
Aoibhin McNeill (Engineering and Physical Sciences, EPS)
Barbra Mutamba (Postgraduate, PG)
Bethany Ferris (School Representative – Institute of Theology)
Brendan Corr (Open First Year)
Ciaran Gallagher (Open)
Cliona McCarney (AHSS)
Connor Daly (Executive Management Committee, EMC)
Daniel Lowe (Open)
David Sands (School Representative – Psychology)
Declan Frith (AHSS)
Derek Crosby (PG)
Eoin Deeney (EMC)
Eoin Donnelly (School Representative – Law)
Farah Ibrahim (AHSS)
Fergal McFerran (Open)
Helen Monaghan (Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, MHLS)
Jack Cong Su (MHLS)
Jack Donnelly (Open First Year)
James Hyde (PG / School Representative – Pharmacy)
James Rodgers (EPS)
Jan Sen Yu (AHSS)
Julia Andrade Rocha (PG)
Julia Whitehouse (AHSS)
Kathryn Waller (AHSS)
Katie O'Hare (AHSS)
Kelly Ann McAteer (AHSS)
Mannix McAlister (Open First Year)
Mark Earney (School Representative – Management)
Martin Lilly (EMC)
Matthew Lowe (EPS)
Naomh Gibson (AHSS)
Niall Bole (EPS)
Niall McShane (EMC)
Niall Robb (AHSS)
Niamh Marley (AHSS)
Odhran Devlin (Open)
Oisín Hassan (AHSS)
Patrick Morgan (EPS)
Philip Barr (Open)
Raymond Dillon (EPS / School Representative – Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science)
Samantha Rogers (AHSS)
Sammy Wade (AHSS)
Sarah Calderwood (PG)
Sarah Wright (Open)
Sarah-Louise Baird (EMC)
Sean Fearon (AHSS)
Sky Aughey (Open)
Tara Pouryahya (MHLS)
Thomas Thompson (Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, MHLS)
Tiernan McAteer (EMC)

In Attendance:

Dominic Doherty (Clerk of Council)
Niamh Ferguson (Social Media Support Officer)
Thom Hinds
Kristina Mulholland (Marketing Assistant)

Andrew Carruthers (Union Speaker, in the Chair) welcomed all attendees to this Statutory Meeting.

853. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from the following Councillors:

Caoimhe McNeill (EMC)
Charlotte Troy (School Representative – History and Anthropology)
Connor Malone (PG)
Faye Ni Cheallaigh (EPS)
Fiachra O'Maolcraoibhe (Open)
James Barnes (PG / School Representative – Politics, International Studies and Philosophy)
Jessica Black (MHLS / School Representative – Biological Sciences)
Mark Millar (School Representative – Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology)
Naomi Sheehan (School Representative – Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering)
Sana Ashraf (School Representative – Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences)
Shannon Downey (Open First Year)

854. MINUTES OF THE STATUTORY MEETING OF 5 DECEMBER 2013

It was agreed that the minutes of the Statutory Meeting of 5 December 2013 (SUC/M/13/7) were a true and accurate record of proceedings.

855. BUSINESS ARISING

There was none.

856. COMMUNICATIONS

The Council noted the following communications:

856.1 That the Queen's Cheerleading Club had decided to rename itself as 'Queen's Knights (Cheerleading)'.

856.2 That nominations for the National Conference delegations would close at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday 12 February 2014.

857. BYE-ELECTIONS

857.1 Mannix McAlister (Open First Year) was elected to serve on Academic Board, following the resignation of Megan Liddy.

858. ELECTIONS

There were none.

859. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS / RULES AMENDMENTS

859.1 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 Indonesian Society

Proposer: Lidya Utari Metta (40093019)
Seconder: Siti Aisyah (40078093)

Queen's University Belfast Poker Club

Proposer: Charlie Shimmins (40104294)
 Seconder: Lucy Shields (40112318)

Belfast Safety and Quality Collaborative (Queen's)

Proposer: Zara Mullan (40076839)
 Seconder: Adam Dalby (40000705)

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 Indonesian Society was approved following appropriate discussion and some minor clarifications by a representative of this group.

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

Recognition of the Belfast Safety and Quality Collaborative (Queen's) was approved following appropriate discussion and some minor clarifications by a representative of this group.

860. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following Reports were considered by the Council:

Report of the Union President	SUC/P/14/1
Report of the Vice President Campaigns and Communications	SUC/P/14/2
Report of the Vice President Clubs and Societies	SUC/P/14/3
Report of the Vice President Community	SUC/P/14/4
Report of the Vice President Education	SUC/P/14/5
Report of the Vice President Equality and Diversity	SUC/P/14/6
Report of the Vice President Welfare	SUC/P/14/7

860.1 The Union President highlighted the following matters when presenting his Report to the Council:

- That funding had been confirmed to support the 'Inspiring Leaders' Programme, in partnership with the William J Clinton Institute (based at Riddel Hall).
- An update was provided in relation to the recent liquidation of the 'SU Lets' business.
- That polling for the forthcoming student officer elections would take place from 7.00 a.m. on Tuesday 4 March 2014 to 5.00 p.m. on Thursday 6 March 2014.
- That the consultation process relating to the potential development of the Students' Union building would be launched in the near future, and that an initial fact finding trip to Nottingham, Sheffield and Leeds had taken place.

In response to a question from Sarah Wright (Open), Mr McShane confirmed that the National Union of Students had been briefed with regard to the trading situation of SU Lets. He added that the national union had expressed a willingness to be involved in the review of recent events and the assessment of any future business case.

Following a show of voting cards, the Report of the Union President (SUC/P/14/1) was accepted.

860.2 The Vice President Campaigns and Communications highlighted the following matters when presenting his Report to the Council:

- The new Students' Union website that had been recently launched.
- The 'Are Ye Well' student wellbeing campaign.
- Progress with regard to encouraging final year students to complete the National Student Survey.
- The forthcoming student officer elections.

In response to a question from Niall Robb (AHSS), Mr Daly stated that he would investigate the availability of a full archive of Council minutes on the Students' Union website.

Following a show of voting cards, the Report of the Vice President Campaigns and Communications (SUC/P/14/2) was accepted.

860.3 The Vice President Clubs and Societies highlighted the following matters when presenting his Report to the Council:

- The recent increase in membership figures for Clubs and Societies.
- That the Refreshers' Fair would take place in the Students' Union on 12 February 2014.

Following a show of voting cards, the Report of the Vice President Clubs and Societies (SUC/P/14/3) was accepted.

860.4 The Vice President Community highlighted the following matters when presenting her Report to the Council:

- The 'Inspiring Leaders' Programme, noting that the deadline for applications for this initiative was 14 February 2014.
- That Student Volunteer Week would take place from 24 February 2014 onwards.
- The Marie Curie Shop Challenge, involving student teams from the Law Society and Rag.

Following a show of voting cards, the Report of the Vice President Community (SUC/P/14/4) was accepted.

860.5 The Vice President Education highlighted the following matters when presenting his Report to the Council:

- That he had been advising students with regard to academic progression, examinations and assessment issues.
- That he had been promoting the National Student Survey within the University Schools.
- The Annual Programme Review.
- The work of the Academic Year Structure Working Group, of which he was a member.

Mr Deeney also commended the work of the Vice President Welfare in relation to the 'Are Ye Well' campaign and the recent library-based activities.

Following a show of voting cards, the Report of the Vice President Education (SUC/P/14/5) was accepted.

860.6 The Vice President Equality and Diversity was not in attendance.

Following a show of voting cards, the Report of the Vice President Equality and Diversity (SUC/P/14/6) was accepted in Ms McNeill's absence.

860.7 The Vice President Welfare highlighted the following matters when presenting his Report to the Council:

- The recent introduction of an Alcohol Awareness Programme for students encountering disciplinary difficulties.
- Recent 'Are Ye Well' campaign activities.
- Ongoing promotion of the National Student Survey.
- His recent participation in the fact finding trip to GB students' unions, to inform the ongoing consultative process for the potential redevelopment of the premises at Queen's Students' Union.

Mr McAteer thanked all student officers and staff members who had assisted with 'Are Ye Well' activities since the last Statutory Meeting.

Following a show of voting cards, the Report of the Vice President Welfare (SUC/P/14/7) was accepted.

861. REPORTS FROM OTHER UNION COMMITTEES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

There were none.

862. REPORTS FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES.

There were none.

863. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS.

There were none.

864. QUESTIONS.

To the Vice President Education:

- 864.1 Following the recent industrial action undertaken by Queen's teaching and support staff (and the announcement of further strikes occurring on the 23rd, the 28th and the 10th of January and February respectively), which, by the UCU's own words, are designed to cause maximum disruption, may I query why this Union supports an action that is specifically designed to cause as much damage to students' education as is possible?

This question is gleaned from the observation that the average overseas student studying in Northern Ireland is spending £12,000 a year on their education (approximately £9,000 for their tuition fee and £3,000 for their maintenance loan). With such money, every academic day is potentially worth hundreds of pounds. As a Students' Union, it is our duty to ensure that student education is damaged as little as possible, and that every possible action is taken to mediate such a response which, as previously mentioned, causes as much damage to a student's education as is possible.

Proposer: David Sands (40080037)
Seconder: Chris Smyth (40060508)

The Vice President Education stated that Council had passed a policy regarding the Students' Union's response to the industrial action and, as a member of the student officer team, he and his colleagues were in the process of enacting this.

In response to a supplementary question from Mr Sands, Mr Deeney stated that the Council was the governing body of the Students' Union and was empowered to create policy on behalf of all student members.

- 864.2 Why is the Students' Union advocating support for strike action that disadvantages the paying student, whose education, the main caveat of joining university, is being harmed in this way?

Proposer: David Sands (40080037)
 Seconder: Chris Smyth (40060508)

The Vice President Education stated that he had already addressed this matter when answering the previous question (minute 864.1 refers). There was no supplementary question.

- 864.3 I recognise the reasons for such a strike, but why is it happening in such a way that the people who are disadvantaged are not the University management but, rather, the students who are committing so much time, money and effort into their education? Is the VP Education, along with the rest of the Sabbatical Officers, exploring alternative ways that allow UCU to continue their attempts to get fair pay while not damaging the education of the students, (who we are supposed to represent), insofar as this is possible? If so, please give examples of such possibilities explored.

Proposer: David Sands (40080037)
 Seconder: Chris Smyth (40060508)

The Vice President Education stated that he fully appreciated the sentiments underpinning the questions that had been tabled. He emphasised that the current strategy, as guided by Council, was for the elected student officers to engage with the campus trade unions and the University management in order to minimise the impact of any further industrial action on student members. There was no supplementary question.

865. MOTIONS.

865.1 ***Tuition Fee Structure***

Council notes that the current fee structure for self-financing students, including those who have had to repeat due to illness or disability, requires full payment to be made prior to January during the academic year.

Council believes that demanding full payment of fees by direct debit over four months is grossly inaccessible for the majority of students and has an adverse affect on those who have caring responsibilities or cannot work to supplement their loans.

Council recognises the pressure that the current fee structure can place on the Student Support Fund and the reality of such a financial burden on students, including the fear of suspension should they not be able to make payments on time potentially leading to students withdrawing from their course due to such a restrictive practice.

Council urges the Executive Management Committee, and specifically the Vice President Welfare, to demand a change to the fee structure for self-financing students to give them options beyond what is currently offered. These should include a payment option in line with student loan payments (September, January and April) and monthly payments (September to June). This should be implemented and the information distributed by the start of Spring Semester 2014.

Proposer: Sarah Wright (40002922)
 Seconder: Brendan Corr (40107847)

Sarah Wright (Open), proposing the motion, stated that those students who had to repeat examinations or other components of academic progression as a result of illness or disability were disadvantaged by the current payment schedule. She further stated that, if the motion in question was passed, it was her hope that new

arrangements could be enacted in time for the beginning of the 2014-15 academic year and not by the start of Spring Semester 2014 (as indicated in the motion).

Barbra Mutamba (Postgraduate), speaking against the motion, stated that this issue had been raised at a recent meeting of the Postgraduate Forum, the problem had been recognised and was the subject of ongoing consultation at this time. She believed that the perceived lack of flexibility in the system related to University 'cash flow issues'.

Cliona McCarney (AHSS), speaking on the motion, stated that if a student was self financing, they would not be in receipt of a loan, so why would they not be able to meet the current payment schedule.

Brendan Corr (Open First Year), speaking for the motion, stated that the fact that this matter had been discussed by the Postgraduate Forum indicated that it was a live issue that needed to be addressed. He stated that, even if the problem could not be addressed in the immediate future, improved measures still needed to be put in place at the earliest opportunity.

Julia Andrade Rocha (Postgraduate), speaking on the motion, stated that she had been informed by a senior figure in the University's Finance Department that the current payment schedule had been agreed by student representative prior to implementation and that there was a significant administrative charge associated with this.

Niall Robb (AHSS), speaking for the motion, stated that, regardless of the current deliberations of the Postgraduate Forum and others within the University, the Council should nonetheless approve this motion.

Tiernan McAteer (Vice President Welfare), speaking on the motion, suggested that the motion be deferred until the next Statutory Meeting of the Council in order to enable further fact finding to be carried out. On a point of information, the Proposer of the motion stated that she was not supportive of this suggestion.

Jack Donnelly (Open First Year), speaking against the motion, stated that Council would not be voting on this matter from an informed position and should therefore defer the motion.

Kathryn Waller (AHSS), speaking for the motion, emphasised the importance of this proposal having as much democratic weight behind it as possible.

Eoin Deeney (Vice President Education), speaking against the motion, stated that it was much more sensible to be well informed with facts and that Council was simply not ready to vote on this issue.

It was proposed to proceed to the vote – this was accepted.

Sarah Wright (Proposer), in summary, stated that she appreciated the various issues that had been raised by Councillors during this important debate and she indicated that there had previously been issues with students being pursued for payments prior to being allowed to formally graduate. She further stated that people needed to recognise the significant levels of stress that were caused by the current arrangements.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion was passed (For 27, Against 18 and Abstentions 2).

865.2 *Vending Machines*

This Council notes that, as stated in the Report of the Vice President Campaigns and Communications to the Council in December 2013, the provision of ATMs is not viable in the McClay Library and the Medical Biology Centre (MBC). Council further notes that those students with no cash on-hand, who are studying overnight during twenty-four hour opening of the McClay Library, will be required to leave the Library in order to get cash to use in vending machines. It is clear that this raises concerns for student safety.

This Council believes that the vending machines around campus, specifically within the McClay Library, should be replaced with alternatives that can accept credit from student cards as payment. It would be desirable if these machines took both cash and student card credit, so that non-students using the McClay Library could still make use of vending options.

This Council believes that such a system would mean that a student studying overnight could top-up their card online and make purchases without needing to leave the Library. While not achieving everything that ATMs in the MBC and McClay Library hoped to accomplish, this is a suitable and worthy alternative.

This Council instructs the Executive Management Committee to lobby in order to have vending machines across campus and specifically in the McClay Library replaced with alternatives that can accept student card credit as payment for goods. Council would like to see these measures to be in place prior to the reintroduction of '24 hour' opening in the McClay Library on 23 April 2014.

Proposer: Niall Robb (40084325)
 Seconder: Kathryn Waller (40077853)

Niall Robb (AHSS), proposing the motion, stated that this motion was essentially addressing a serious safety issue for students, given that the need to access an ATM at night currently necessitated a walk in darkness. He suggested that the introduction of vending machines that could accept credit would represent a potential solution and, whilst he noted that there may be a cost implication, this should be weighed against the importance of securing the safety of students.

Farah Ibrahim (AHSS), speaking against the motion, stated that spending significant funds on this matter would represent unjustifiable extravagance that should be better channelled towards something other than the need to excuse a four-minute walk from the University.

Patrick Morgan (EPS), speaking on the motion, wanted to know more information regarding a system that would accept credit that was stored on student cards. On a point of information, the Union President stated that the University had established a working party to investigate cashless alternatives.

Kathryn Waller (AHSS), speaking for the motion, stated that she would not feel safe if she had to walk to an ATM at 3.00 a.m. given recent incidents in the University area at night.

Niall McShane (Union President), speaking on the motion, stated that the University's Academic Board had considered a report from the Directorate of Student Plus and, subsequently, a pilot scheme would be implemented in the McClay Library at the earliest opportunity.

Niall Bole (EPS), speaking for the motion, stated that the University's vending machines were a matter of contract with an external third-party supplier and Queen's could ask for machines with different capabilities at any stage. He added that, regardless of the planned pilot exercise, there was no harm in passing this motion.

It was proposed to proceed to the vote – this was accepted.

Niall Robb (Proposer), in summary, stated that the necessary technology existed and could be accessed. He added that the introduction of cashless alternatives throughout campus would greatly enhance student safety at night.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion was clearly passed.

865.3 **Academic Textbooks and Materials**

This Council notes that:

1. In most modules, lecturers expect students to buy the required textbooks and that these can come to quite some considerable cost (averaging around £200 per semester for certain courses).
2. That in some Schools, such as Law, there are often only one or two copies of required readings available in the Library, especially journals.

Council believes that:

1. The Library should contain sufficient numbers of copies of required and recommended reading for all courses, so that all students may access them.
2. Reporting a lack of books should be easier.

Council resolves:

To instruct the Sabbatical Officers to work with both the Library and Module Conveners from across all Schools in order to ensure that there are a sufficient amount of copies of texts available to all students from the Library free of charge.

Proposer: Kathryn Waller (40077853)
 Seconder: Cliona McCarney (40079596)

Kathryn Waller (AHS), proposing the motion, stated that the poor stock of books and journals in the University libraries was a matter of significant concern and that students could not afford to buy all of the required materials.

Eoin Deeney (Vice President Education), speaking against the motion, stated that he appreciated the sentiment behind the motion but could not accept the non-specific wording, including meaningless terms such as 'sufficient'. He stated that it would be impossible for student officers to lobby on the basis of the wording of the motion.

Sarah-Louise Baird (Vice President Community), speaking against the motion, stated that, in most academic courses, book lists change regularly and the cost of implementing this motion would therefore be astronomical.

Niall Robb (AHSS), speaking for the motion, stated that the meaning of the term 'sufficient' would obviously differ from course to course. He believed that this motion should be carried and that student officers should negotiate the fine detail with each School on the basis of need.

Martin Lilly (Vice President Clubs and Societies), speaking on the motion, stated that the obvious answer to this issue was making more materials available online.

Niamh Marley (AHSS), speaking for the motion, stated that it should be possible for the University to increase stocks of essential texts to the position where students had some realistic chance of being able to access the materials.

A friendly amendment was accepted, adding “whether online or in print” to the end of the motion, which now read:

This Council notes that:

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Council believes that:

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2. Reporting a lack of books should be easier.

Council resolves:

To instruct the Sabbatical Officers to work with both the Library and Module Conveners from across all Schools in order to ensure that there are a sufficient amount of copies of texts available to all students from the Library free of charge, whether online or in print.

It was proposed to proceed to the vote – this was accepted.

Kathryn Waller (Proposer), in summary, stated that this issue affected many students and it was good for Council to pass motions that actually help people.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion was clearly passed.

866. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

- 866.1 It was noted that the following Councillors had asked to be included on the consultative group to consider the potential future development of the Students' Union premises: Niall Bole, Oisin Hassan, Mannix McAlister, Kelly Ann McAteer and Fergal McFerran.

867. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Union Speaker announced that the next Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council would take place at 6.00 p.m. on Thursday 20 March 2014 in The Space, Level 1, Students' Union.

DOMINIC DOHERTY (Clerk, Students' Union Council)