

**MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 15th MARCH AT 6 PM
IN THE WILLIAMS ROOM, MCINTYRE BUILDING**

Present: As per sederunt

Apologies: M Abbas, S Mclean, S Garkov, H El AJouz, J Hardy, H Todd, L McDougall

Attending: B Hay, C Bingham, K Fraser

1: Apologies, Minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2018

The minutes of the previous council meeting were approved.

2: Peer Support – Presentation from Eric Medcalf, Deputy Director of the Counselling and Psychological Service

E Medcalf gave an overview of the development of the Peer Support Programme of which four schools (Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Business and Social & Political Science) have funded directly. It was noted that CaPs have been able to recruit two new members of staff with one dedicated to coordinating the programme.

E Medcalf informed council that CaPS is planning develop the programme and increase the number of peer supporters over the next academic year. Peer supporters have regular support sessions with team members which are also used to gather information on issues they are dealing with or queries they receive. The overall aim of peer support is to ensure that low risk students were given the support and guidance needed while alleviating pressure on the main counselling service.

3: Update on Industrial Action

K Powell updated council members of the national UCU industrial action and her meetings with the Principal, Vice-Principal N Juster and University's Director of HR, C Barr regarding the impact on staff and students. Council were informed that there were 14 students occupying the Senate Room in support of the strike. K Powell had met with the occupiers to offer support.

Council noted the possibility of further strike action during the spring exam diet and into the next academic session. The situation would be monitored closely by the SRC and K Powell will work closely with the University and UCU.

There followed a brief discussion regarding the University's approach to managing the impact of the strikes and the communication of how the strikes would affect students' studies.

C Holdsworth advised that there was a strong feeling from students that there was lack of information and clarity from the University as to how they would mitigate the strike's impact on students.

B Hall-Jones stated that many students increasingly feel like consumers in Higher Education and the strike resulted in many feeling that they are paying for services and support they are not receiving. B Hall-Jones also stated that it was unclear where the money from striking staff's wages was being invested.

A Ioannou reported that there were concerns for veterinary medicine students, who have very condensed courses and have a strict time frame to comply with professional requirements, as to how the strike action would impact on professional accreditation.

Regarding the allocation of staff wages saved during the strike, C Holdsworth felt the lack of understanding on this reflected a general lack of transparency on where student fees are spent across the HE sector. F Gewirtz-O'Reilly advised that it would be extremely difficult to accurately allocate compensation due time lost due to strike action. K Powell informed Council that UCU had requested that withheld wages of those taking part in industrial action would be allocated to students but she felt that any funds should go jointly to both student and staff support initiatives, such as mental health first aid training.

X Weiss asked if it would be possible to request a financial statement from the University that pin points where the money from staff wages is going and this would help with transparency and accountability. K Powell said it would likely be extremely difficult due to the reasons outlined by C Holdsworth previously.

S Kirby asked if it was any plans on what the impact would be if external examiners were to take strike action. K Powell responded that more comprehensive guidance was currently being developed by the university to address exam contingency and that she would follow up with Senate Office.

4: Council Reports

4.1 President - K Powell

**K Powell to
follow up
with Senate
Office**

4.1.1 Personal Relationships Policy

Copies of the new policy will be sent round council members as it includes direct reference to the relationship between student representatives and University staff. More clarity had been requested on General Teaching Assistants and their working relationships. The policy had been approved by Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee and was to go to the upcoming Chief Advisors Sub-Committee.

K Powell to circulate Personal Relationships Policy

4.1.2 University Accommodation

K Powell informed Council that D Duncan, University Secretary and A Allen, Director of Estates and Commercial Services had notified her that rents will increase by 3.5% across the University's accommodation aside from Wolfson Halls. K Powell felt strongly that the University's approach to consultation on rent increases had been tokenistic and disappointing. There had been minimal consultation with the SRC, held at the last moment, when the University had already appeared to set in motion publicity around the rent rises, including the printing of the new prospectuses for 19/20.

K Powell informed council that she had been clear that there needed to be instant improvements in halls, a meaningful consultation with the SRC and students and a long term accommodation strategy in order to attempt to justify these rises.

F Gewirtz O'Reilly asked what justification has been given for the rise in rents? K Powell responded that the rise was being attributed to inflation.

E Napier felt that it could be a dangerous precedent to set for the SRC in asking for improvements when the university has already proceeded with rises. And that doing so could enable future decisions to be taken without consultation with the SRC if the University felt it could remove itself from of controversy by acceding to some demands.

K Powell stated that she would invite Ann Allen to the next council meeting.

K Powell to invite Ann Allen to council meeting

4.1.3 Court Meeting

The SRC's Annual Report had been presented to the Court meeting on the 14th February. K Powell stated that she referred to the continued success of the Student Teaching Awards, Volunteering, Clubs and Societies Awards and class rep engagement. There was more of a focus on new initiatives such as; sexual violence prevention training, Mind your Mate training , the Class Rep Conference, and other related welfare activity. Court had also noted that support for volunteering, clubs, and societies was under resourced.

4.1.4 Student Support & Development Committee (SSDC)

SSDC was in the process of being replaced by the Student Experience Committee. The current Council representatives would assist in representing students and the SRC until the end of their term.

4.2 VP Education – H Todd

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.3 VP Student Activities - P Kariappa

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.4 UG Arts Convenor - V Ferry

V Ferry stated that the Employability Workshop was productive and hoped that similar events would be continued in future.

4.5 PG Science and Engineering Convenor – C Holdsworth

4.5.1 Graduate Teaching Assistant Review Meeting

The meeting was organised by HR begin the process of reviewing support and guidance for GTA's. The University's Extended Workforce Policy will be updated to provide better guidance to GTAs and Demonstrators regarding tutorial preparation, timesheets, marking and employer communication.

4.5.2 PG Engagement

There had been a meeting between the PG reps, K Powell and B Hay to discuss PG engagement and how to better utilise the Gilchrist Seminar Room. Some interesting ideas had been discussed and consideration would be given as to how best take them forward.

4.6 PG Social Sciences Convenor – M Harris

A student experience sub- committee has been formed to feed into the Adam Smith Business School Project Development Board however M Harris had concerns about the lack of students on this committee other than herself as a student rep.

4.7 Chemistry School Rep - K Brownson

Sabbs to
organise a
meeting with
the PG reps

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.8 Computing Science School Rep – S Brown

S Brown commented on the positive number of candidates running for the Computing Science School Rep position in the recent election.

4.9 Disability Equality Rep - E Docherty

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.10 Humanities School Rep - E Hardy

Strike action had postponed the School Learning & Teaching Committee and this would be rescheduled.

4.11 Physics & Astronomy School Rep - B Hall-Jones

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.12 Mathematics & Statistics School Rep - M Fahd Asif

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.13 Veterinary Medicine School Rep - A Ioannou

A Ioannou reported that both the Vet School's peer support representative and the Vet School staff wanted more engagement with the Counselling Service. One solution mooted was periodic visits or a satellite CaPS office to support students with mental health issues at the school.

A Ioannou -
Meet with VP
Student
Support and
VPSS elect to
discuss viability
of support.

4.14 First Year Rep - P Aasen

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.15 Age Equality Officer - E Napier

E Napier informed council that there had been a productive meeting with the Senate Office, Equality & Diversity Unit and the Advice Centre team about taking the Student Parents Policy to the Chief Advisers' Sub-Committee. One of the long term aims of the policy would be to have self certification for student parents similar to the Student Carers Policy.

4.16 Mental Health Equality Officer - F Nokhbatolfoghahai

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.17 PG MVLS Convenor - K Leslie

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.18 Social & Political Sciences School Rep - C McCormack

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.19 First Year Rep - M Ballaty

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

4.20 UG Social Sciences Convenor - J Horsman

Nothing to add from written circulated report.

5: Class Rep Conference Report - HM Todd

As H M Todd was absent from the meeting, E Hardy updated council on the conference. Some key points raised at the conference were:

- Greater demand for lecture recording to make classes more accessible
- Better guidance for marking styles due to variance in styles from individuals and length of time between grading and feedback
- Use of login system to prevent desk hogs in study spaces and the library
- More training for staff in order to better utilise Moodle and make it more accessible.

UG attendance was weaker than PG, this could be ascribed to the differences in teaching time and UG's being less able to attend due to classes. There was a good spread of students from across each College with the majority hailing from Social Sciences.

E Hardy reported that the vast majority of students attending fed back that the conference was excellent and felt the sessions were interesting and fostered good discussions. Attendees also felt that their feedback was been taken on board and that the event was a good learning experience giving them greater insight into the workings of the University and the SRC and definitely something worth continuing.

6: Volunteering Clubs and Societies Week Report - P Kariappa

6.1 VCS Week

P Kariappa presented her report regarding the Volunteering, Clubs and Societies week and the VCS Awards. The week had managed to build on progress from last year. However, P Kariappa felt the timing of the week was an issue and it would benefit from being moved to the first semester when students are looking for opportunities or work experience. With the week taking place in the second semester students are already involved in other extracurricular activities and this deters them from engaging. October and November were mooted as possible new months for the week to take place.

6.2 VCS Awards

Nominations for the VCS awards had opened earlier than in previous years, with nominations opening at the end of the first semester to encourage nominations from students. The awards has seen their highest numbers of nominations yet with 365 nominations across the 8 categories and the continued growth and support of the awards was welcomed.

7: Dissertation Feedback Survey

This had circulated to council members prior to the 15th March meeting and feedback on its contents was requested by the VP Education. The recent Class Rep Conference had flagged that it appeared many students were not receiving feedback on their dissertations. Currently the approach to feedback across schools seems inconsistent and vague in some cases and that there should be more uniform and specific guidance for staff and students across the university. This was anticipated to be an area that the SRC would work on in the future.

8: AOCB

A number of council members expressed concern as to what procedure should be followed where a council position goes unfilled. J Horsman noted that there were two school rep positions unfilled in his College but hoped these would be filled in the autumn byelection.

M Harris raised that a motion could be drafted for council consideration in order to create a mechanism that would allow an incumbent representative to represent students until the Autumn by-election after their term ends at the end of June. This would provide an interim solution during the period running up to elections and help ensure student representation on committees and working groups taking place over the summer period. It was agreed to look into possible solutions to make sure students were adequately represented.

9: Date of Next Meeting – Provisional date of 19th April, 6pm Williams Room.