

Minutes

Subject:	Student Officer Committee Minutes
Date:	Thursday, 29 January 2015
Paper:	SOC1356

Key Discussions

- Question of quorum for SOC meetings
- Postgraduate Referendum proposals
- How long campaigning should last and when the voting should close in the UUEAS elections

Key Actions

- The FTOs meeting, as Management Committee, agreed that a meeting could discuss non-binding, consultative items without the required level of quoracy whilst waiting for the meeting to become quorate before, when quorate moving on to discuss substantive items
- Approved the proposals on the Postgraduate Referendum but with the additions of a quorum for the General Meeting and a quorum for the Referendum taken from the relevant sections of the Bye-Laws scaled to the proportion of postgraduate students in the student population
- Appointed T Moore as Deputy Returning Officer for the Referendum
- Agreed principles for formulating the election timetable

Union of UEA Students Purpose:

"To enrich the life of every UEA student"

Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

29 January 2015

Voting Members present:

Josh Wilson (Ethical issues Officer), Liam McCafferty (PG Education Officer), Chris Jarvis (Campaigns and Democracy Officer), Freddie Redfern (Ethnic Minorities Officer), Tom Etheridge (Non Portfolio Officer), Iain Goddard (Environment Officer), Theo Antoniou Phillips (Non Portfolio Officer), Connor Rand (UG Education Officer), Yinbo Yu (Activities and Opportunities Officer), S Glakousaki (International Officer)

Chair

Holly Staynor (Welfare, Community & Diversity Officer)

Non-Voting Member present:

Jim Dickinson (Chief Executive)

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Democracy and Governance Coordinator), Josh Clare (Head of Student Engagement), C Kidd (Lettings Agency Manager), J Spiro (Head of Advocacy), D Messling (Research, Policy and Projects Co-ordinator)

Apologies:

Liz Cody (Non Portfolio Officer), Tom Southerden (Non Portfolio Officer), Dolly Ogunrinde (Women's Officer), Max Levene (Students with Disabilities Officer), Dan Wrigglesworth (LGBT+ Officer).

Chair noted that the meeting was inquorate but would consider items that would not require any binding decisions until the expected arrival of Mr McCafferty.

1341 Departmental Presentation: Housing

C Kidd made a presentation on the work of Home Let and Home Run

Questions were asked as to:

Rent setting policy,
Energy suppliers,
Switch-Off Campaign,
Accessibility ,
Extending Home Let to NUA,
Mary Chapman Court,
Housing Socials for Incoming Students,
Visa checking by landlords,

Responses were:

Rent setting policy: we have none but give guidance to landlords as to local market rates;

Energy suppliers: discussed encouraging students to enrol in the City Council's bulk-buy scheme;

Switch-Off Campaign: will look into extending this from campus to Home Let;

Accessibility: no specific rules in place, but we encourage landlords;

Extending Home Let to NUA: will investigate possibilities;

Mary Chapman Court: discussion as to possibility of, if the lease is not-renewed, this being a suitable property for a future Housing Co-op;

Housing Socials for Incoming Students: we do not do these at present unless this is a major shortage of campus accommodation;

Visa checking by landlords: our priority is to remain within the law, we will focus on possible help for landlords on verification and countering discrimination against students in need of a visa.

S Glakousaki noted that, according to evidence she had received from her constituents, discrimination was already taking place.

1342 Officer Research Requests

D Messling, Research, Policy and Projects Co-ordinator, noted that a key part of role was providing research support for Officers, in providing 'ammunition' for lobbying or campaigning.

Research requests:

I Goddard: University energy usage

T Antoniou Phillips: Turn-out at Council

S Glakousaki: Visa requirements: clearing/non-clearing students.

C Rand noted that L McCafferty had arrived after the time stipulated in the Bye-Laws for a meeting to become quorate.

C Jarvis argued that the stipulation applied purely to Union Council meetings where changes to the Constitution or the Bye-Laws could be decided and that it would be in order for SOC to continue the meeting now that it had become quorate.

J Dickinson advised that any question of interpretation of the Bye-Laws was in the hands of the Trustee Board and that the present matter might be decided upon by the Full Time Officers meeting as

Management Committee, a sub-committee of the Board. Chair convened the Full Time officers as an ad hoc meeting of Management Committee; C Rand, L McCafferty, Y Yu and C Jarvis voted to confirm their interpretation that the present meeting of SOC should proceed as a quorate meeting.

1343 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January

S Glakousaki noted she had posted her apologies on Facebook and these had not been recorded; with this addition the minutes were agreed.

1344 Matters Arising

T Etheridge raised the difficulties of accessibility to Union House at the weekend.
Chair noted this matter had been raised at Management Committee.

1345 Action Log

Chair noted, concerning trans-exclusion in election regulations, that the deadline for resolutions to NUS Conference was the following Friday and she would be looking to meet this deadline.

1346 Financial Estimates Steering Discussion

This item was postponed until the following meeting.

1347 Postgraduate Referendum Update

L McCafferty circulated a paper to the meeting with proposals on the rules and timeline for the Referendum.

L McCafferty noted that Council had mandated him to run a referendum on a merger between UUEAS and the UEA. He noted that SOC had then set up a working group to see how the Referendum should be run.

L McCafferty reported the working group had reached agreement on what the question should be and some of the details of the running of the Referendum but there had been no agreement reached on quite a few aspects of the process. He believed that the group would not be able to reach agreement on the 'nuts and bolts' questions; he attributed this failure to the lack of consensus within the group as to whether the Referendum should, in fact, take place.

J Clare advised that there had been multiple working group meetings since Council had passed the policy.

L McCafferty noted there had been agreement that the GSA side would produce a set of rules for the running of the Referendum in time to be sent to the Registrar and for the SOC agenda and that these had not,

in fact, been produced; which meant there would now be a possibility that the Referendum might not take place in the current academic year. He noted that, in order, to avoid this possibility he had, himself, drafted a set of referendum rules to fit the unique characteristics of a referendum for solely postgraduate members.

C Jarvis voiced his concern that the paper did not, in fact, refer specifically to the special case of a postgraduate referendum as there was no specific quorum for the general meeting of for the ballot.

Chair asked for clarification as to the implications of SOC making a decision on the proposals without any members of the GSA present. L McCafferty noted that the policy had mandated him, individually, to organise a referendum and he had formed the working group for wider consultation. He noted his belief that events had demonstrated that it would be impossible to fulfil his mandate through the working group so he was bringing the matter to SOC for a decision to be made.

S Glakousaki argued that the proposals should include a specific quorum for the general meeting and for the ballot.

I Goddard asked for more detail on why it was thought the working group would not reach an agreement.

C Jarvis noted there had been a number of deadlines agreed and the GSA members of the group had failed to meet them. He noted the importance of holding the Referendum before the main UUEAS elections.

SOC noted the numbers for quorum at a referendum in the Bye-Laws and what the percentage would mean in terms of the number of postgraduate students.

T Etheridge noted that the Referendum would be indicative and his assumption that its result could be disregarded by Union Council. L McCafferty agree this to be the case and that the GSA, also, could reject the results.

L McCafferty, in clarification to the Chair, noted that, if approved, he would take the proposed ad hoc rules for approval by the Registrar and that the timeline would be the same as that for an ordinary referendum.

I Goddard asked for clarification as to whether the working group had agreed the proposals.

L McCafferty confirmed that the question had been agreed but that there had been no explicit decision as to agreement on a specific timeline; he believed the group's working assumption had been that if the decision was made to go ahead then the timeline posed no particular problem. He noted that when he and C Jarvis had, subsequent to the last group meeting, asked for the GSA group members' approval of the present proposal; they had replied that they did not think that the Referendum should go ahead at the present

time.

C Jarvis clarified that the question had been agreed, the assumption was that the timeline would be agreed but there had been no agreement as to the Referendum rules.

L McCafferty confirmed that the GSA group had been asked for their version of the rules but had not submitted one.

C Rand argued that SOC would have to come to a view as to whether the working group was, in effect, preventing an Officer fulfilling a mandate from Union Council.

L McCafferty argued as to the issues of a quorum for a general meeting discussed earlier that this would be a strange requirement for what would be an indicative and not a legislative process.

SOC discussed what number would be proportionate if it was decided to have a quorate PG general meeting and concluded that it would be twenty members.

T Etheridge noted his concerns that UUEAS appeared to be making unilateral decisions as to the future of the GSA.

L McCafferty noted that within the GSA constitution there was no provision for making policy or for binding their officers to a policy and this posed a difficulty for proposing any change including the present proposal.

I Goddard noted he had heard the GSA members of SOC had not been informed of the present meeting.

L McCafferty noted he had informed the GSA members that the proposals needed to be approved in time for the present meeting.

T Moore advised that he was sure that these Officers had been sent an email agenda and he assumed they had received notification via the Facebook group.

SOC approved the PG Education Officer's proposals on the Postgraduate Referendum but with the additions of a quorum for the General Meeting and a quorum for the Referendum taken from the relevant sections of the Bye-Laws scaled to the proportion of postgraduate students in the student population. SOC noted the precise working would be arrived at as a Chair's Action and would be published on the SOC Facebook page.

SOC appointed T Moore as Deputy Returning Officer for the Referendum.

1348 Election Timetable Update

T Etheridge noted his concerns as to keeping the campaign period relatively short as, presently, it was too extended for those candidates on intensive courses.

SOC noted the possible problems with Derby Day and Go Global dates. SOC noted the following principles for designing the timetable:

- To be mindful in drafting of important dates in students' diaries
- A careful balance of the needs of electors and candidates in determining the duration of the campaign
- Precise timing to guarantee the availability of DRO/RO and to provide a reasonable climax to the process

J Wilson thought it would be too late for this year but he hoped that for the following year the planning and decision making for the election timetable would be transferred from SOC, a potentially self-interested group, to a working group composed of UUEAS staff and students who had declared that they would not be standing for office.

SOC agreed in principle that campaigning should open on Thursday, 5 March and that voting would close on Friday, 13 March.

SOC agreed that a revised timetable incorporating the above principles would be brought to the next meeting.

1349 NUS International Student Conference

SOC approved a funding request for a maximum of £225 to send the Activities and Opportunities Officer to the NUS International Student Conference.

At this point and Officer had to leave and the Chair declared the meeting inquorate.