

The Council

Monday 15 June 2015

7:00pm, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX – Room MAL 414/415

Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on Monday 23 March 2015 in Room 1.20 at University Square Stratford

PRESENT-in Person	Richard Brinck-Johnsen (in the chair), John B Lindner III, Kevin Lau, Samuel Georgewill, David Kirkman, David Lockhart and Darren Shaw.
PRESENT-by Proxy	Charles-Michael Berry, Hana Faber, Jon Warner, Jerry Richardson, Mark Gould, Reubs Walsh, Robert Otterwell, David Pleavin, CJ Bennett, Luc Sei, Simeon Aluko, AJ Haseley, Alan Duval, Alex Fridgant and Nick Antjoule.
APOLOGIES	Sandra Claggett, Bianca Rajasekaran, Angela Bennett, Claude Keineidam, Saba Shiraz, Patricia Wing, Deebra Goldreich, Grayson Friend, Yee Chung, Ibrahim Ali, Joynal Ahmed, Alex Owolade, Sapphire Mason-Brown, Sofiya Ahmed and Linda Paul.
IN ATTENDANCE	Rob Park (secretary and minutes)
OBSERVERS	Two ordinary members were observing the meeting.

Quorum is 17. A quorum is present (20 voters).

Chair's Business

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Vice Chair of Council, Richard Brinck-Johnsen took the chair and opened the meeting.
2. Apologies and proxy-appointments were read out.
3. A question was raised in regards to the Chair of Council stepping aside from his duties for the remainder of the academic year. The Secretary confirmed that Charles was separately elected as a trustee; that Richard Brinck-Johnsen has become Acting Chair due to the absence of the elected Chair (as he is the elected vice-chair) and that Charles retained his ex-officio place as a Student Governor (which would expire at the end of this academic year).
4. The Council resolved that for all intents and purposes that the Acting Chair would undertake duties that ordinarily would be expected of the Chair of Council (e.g. would be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee et al.)
5. The Secretary reported that it was ambiguous whether there was now a vacancy for Vice Chair or whether Richard was 'acting as' – that this would need to be clarified in the bye-laws in the future.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

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6. The minutes from the meeting of the full Council, held in January 2015, were confirmed.
 7. There were no matters arising not otherwise on the agenda.
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Matters for Report

Report from Student Officers:

8. **John Lindner:** gave an oral report
 - a. Congratulations to those who have been recently elected to SU office following the Sabbatical Elections. Mark Gould would be the new Communication & Activities Officer from 1 August.
 - b. The Acting Returning Officer has given a report with recommendations for changes to rules and how to run the elections for the future. There had been a number of complaints about conduct of candidates, but also some weakness in the nominations process. John thanked Joshi Sidhu for chairing and running the hustings event for the election.
 - c. The election turnout was the highest number of unique voters since 2003 (not that that is a huge amount, but onwards and upwards!)
 - d. Work is on going to review the current list and affiliations of societies to the Union, identifying any moribund or delinquent societies. A C+S meeting is being planned for next term, along with induction.
 - e. John reported that if there are no committees, then the Union could appoint “administrators” to run a society until a new set of society officer are recruited and in place.
 - f. John recommended that no trustee should be an elected principal officer of a club or society ordinarily – that they may act as interim officers or administrators, but not as ordinary officers running a society or club.
 - g. The Secretary agreed that he would check the rules and regulations for the current situation.
 - h. Council members discussed the recommendation – John cited that he was at one point the president of the ACS, but handed this on. David Kirkman noted that he has currently a principal officer for the Choir and the Labour Club; Richard Brinck-Johnsen reported that he was the president of the Conservatives and that other current and future officers were in similar positions in societies.
 - i. It was generally agreed that it was a conflict of interest to be a principal officer of a society and be a decision maker in the funding or running of a society or clubs from the perspective of being a Union executive of trustees – it was confirmed that there is a Bye-Law in place that sets out handling conflicts of interest and that the Code of Conduct for trustees and paid officers also handles conflicts.
 - j. The website was discussed and was in need of new content and also of officer blogs to communicate better the work of the students

reps to the student body.

- k. John reported that he has attended the College Safety Committee along with the Union Manager. John stated that he felt the new Health & Safety Officer was getting to grips with things and settling in well including matters raised by students/student body:
 - i. Sharp objects being poked into students during psychology classes;
 - ii. Safety reports not being received from the Schools or student central;
 - iii. Matters raised regarding the various incidents and behavior in the bar;
 - iv. The Safety Committee had discussed and parked the matter raised by the Council about creating a smoke free campus.
 - l. In relation to the Governors' meeting, John reported that they had agreed a new policy pursuant to the College's duty under the Bribery Act 2011 (a.k.a. whistleblowing)
 - m. The SEWP Committee for the Spring Term has been cancelled. It has been hoped to meet to receive the new draft Student Engagement Strategy, which was now with the College Secretary.
 - n. General student feedback that John had received was that students felt their work isn't being fed back in a timely and quality manner.
 - o. The issue of the student social space, strategic planning and the future plans will be being discussed this coming week with the Director of Finance.
 - p. There was a question regarding the Lamp & Owl magazine, and its future and what has happened to it: John reported that the current year has not produced any copies; that previously the editorial team would send to the printers and the Union would get the invoice. The process has been tightened up and also a new team for the next academic year will be sought following a meeting with the School of Arts.
 - q. There will need to be a new Code of Conduct and Editorial Code for the magazine going forward. This will be consulted on with the new editorial team/management. It was reported that the Executive Committee had discussed and provisionally endorsed the plan to create umbrella groupings for some of the student activities – such as the Media Group for the various media, web, etc.
 - r. The bi-annual Members' Survey will be going out for this third time over the Summer; this will include a section on media and the Lamp & Owl.
 - s. The Council approved the report.
9. **David Kirkman:** gave an oral report:

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- a. David stated that he would proud to have been re-elected as the Disabled Members Officer for a second term in office;
 - b. As a member of the Academic Board, he has signed a requisition to convene an Extraordinary Meeting of the Academic Board to discuss the provision of the 24 hour access campaign;
 - c. There was a meeting of the IT Advisory Group to which David had attended, and the 24 hour IT rooms were discussed there – there was no agreement to re-open them;
 - d. David reported that the Labour Party were planning on reversing the Coalition Governments changes to the Disabled students Allowance as all evidence to them points to the old system working. A motion about the DSA has been submitted to both the NUS National Conference and the NUS Disabled Students Campaign conference.
 - e. It was generally agreed that asking all students to cover the first £200 of the DSA would cause a two tier system in higher education, with 'richer universities' and those with fewer disabled students simply paying the charge.
 - f. The Council approved the report.

10. Other Officers' Reports

- a. Linda Paul and Luc Sei were both unwell, and this was accepted by the Council to waive their reports.
- b. Reubs Walsh was away attending the NUS Women's Conference and had sent their apologies to the meeting. They had spoken with other officers prior to the meeting on their work, including the LGBTQ+ Officer-elect (Richard Brinck-johnsen). The Council agreed to waive the report.
- c. Richard Brinck-Johnsen gave a short report on the Union's attendance at the NUS LGBT+ Campaign Conference. There was a vote to hold a dedicated autonomous Trans Students Conference, however, the vote to create a full-time Trans Officer failed to achieve a two-thirds majority (it got a simple majority). Birkbeck SU has submitted a Challenge to the NUS Estimates to ensure that the matter is now raised at National Conference.
- d. Samuel Georgewill gave a report at the Stratford Officer: he asked the Council to support an end of year event at Stratford in July. He encouraged new officers to visit USS once a week. John Lindner reported that UEL SU had agreed to hold joint events at USS. It was reported that the noise inside the open atria at USS was very loud and this could create inaccessible study space at times. Darren Shaw reported that the Psychological Society would be holding an event at USS in the next month.
- e. It was noted that as Birkbeck Stratford students get UEL cards, they are restricted in borrowing rights in the UEL library. However, other Birkbeck students, with Bloomsbury cards, can use the UEL library fully. It was noted that the UEL library is 24 hours – unlike the

Birkbeck library. USS closes at 9:30pm during term time (and 6pm out of term).

- f. Samuel requested that officers of the union and societies make a pledge to attend the July social event at USS, and that if they could not attend, to make a video to show at the event. It was noted that the Summer Term ends on Friday 3 July.
 - g. John agreed to ask clubs, societies and officers to attend the event at the end of the Summer Term.
 - h. It was noted that the January meeting of the Council had discussed and approved a paper regarding representation at USS, and the founding of the quasi-autonomous USS Students' Association.
- 11. The Council approved these additional reports that were given.
 - 12. The Council noted that no report and no apologies had been received from the Education Officer. It was agreed that until a report satisfactory to the Council had been received, that no payment would be made to Zheng. The Secretary reported that the auditors had asked him about how the sabbatical officers work and time was account, monitored and managed - as they had reviewed the minutes of the Trustees and officer accountability had been a running theme at meetings.
 - 13. The Council noted that under the Disciplinary Regulations, the policy states that no submitting a report to the Council or having a report rejected, would a technical matter of Censure.

Matters for Decision

Policy Motions for Agreement

- 14. **Funding of Welfare and Disability Support Services**
 - a. The motion was presented by David Kirkman, and seconded by John Lindner
 - b. There was no opposition to the motion
 - c. The motion was approved as policy.
- 15. **Student Central Room Hire Rates**
 - a. The motion was presented by David Kirkman, and seconded by John Lindner
 - b. There was no opposition to the motion
 - c. The motion was approved as policy.
- 16. **Funding for The Arts**
 - a. The motion was presented by David Kirkman, and seconded by Richard Brinck-Johnsen
 - b. There was no opposition to the motion
 - c. The motion was approved as policy.
 - d.

Any Other Business

Dates of Future Meetings

17. The Council agreed that the April meeting of the Council would be combined with the third section of the Annual General Meeting.
18. The deadline for nominations for Colours & Honours Awards is 31 May. The previous years nominations would be considered as well; the awards ceremony would likely be in July.
19. The Freshers' fayre is likely to be the last Thursday in September and will be held at Student Central.
20. There is a meeting of the Executive Committee at 2:30pm on Wednesday 25 April.

Elections

21. There was a general discussion about the conduct of and behavior of candidates in the recent cross-campus election. There was also some concerns raised about the nominations process in the election and with joint nominations.
22. It was noted that the Acting returning officer had made recommendations for rules and procedures changes.

The meeting closed at 9:00pm

POLICY APPROVED AT THE MEETING:

FUNDING OF WELFARE AND DISABILITY SERVICES

This AGM notes with some concern the lack of funding for disability and welfare services.

This AGM resolves upon the Executive and Trustee Boards to:

- 1.) Lobby the college to increase the staffing of the Disability Office to a sufficient level to allow for a drop in advice centre.
- 2.) Secure an increase in the block grant to increase staffing levels, so that the Union can provide a better and more fit for purpose service to the students at Birkbeck.

ROOM HIRE CHARGES AT STUDENT CENTRAAL

This AGM reaffirms its condemnation of the University Of London's decision to remove the union services from democratic control and rebrand it under the banner of Student Central.

This AGM further condemns the decision by Student Central to charge students from any constituent college of the University commercial rates to hire rooms for club/society events, which includes a minimum hiring period of 4 hours, meaning a minimum per booking of £160 for the smallest of rooms.

This AGM resolves to:

- 1.) Reinvigorate the campaign to return Student Central to the democratic control of a student union.
- 2.) Write to the University Of London demanding free room hire for clubs/societies events.

FUNDING OF THE ARTS

AGM notes the lack of provision and support for the Arts within Birkbeck College.

AGM resolves:

- 1.) Lobby Birkbeck College Management and Estates to increase provision for the performing arts.
- 2.) Mandate the Executive and Trustee board to lobby the college finance director to increase our funding to include a £15k budget for the performing arts within the BCSU Block Grant
- 3.) Encourage and promote students to create performing arts societies so that Birkbeck performing arts rivals that of other universities.