

Union of UEA Students Mission 2009-13

1. To create positive change in matters relating to the education of UEA students
by effectively representing their collective views.



Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

11 October 2012

Summary

Key Discussions

- SOC internal communications
- Loyalty Cards
- SOC's response to the University's consultation concerning faith on campus
- Presence of Union banner at TUC demo

Key Actions

- Facebook to be SOC's sole internal communications channel
- No response to the University's consultation on faith on campus to be made by SOC as a body
- The matter of a policy proposal to Council should be left for consideration to the meeting of the faith groups with the Chair of SOC to be held on 22 October
- Agreed funding for members' tube travel to TUC demo agreed
- Agreed funding for International Officer to attending NUS International Officer training
- Agreed funding of £78 for badges and a banner for Save UEA Music's commemorative event to mark the anniversary of their formation

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Voting Members present:

Jess Lewis (Non-Portfolio Officer), Bintu Foday (Non-Portfolio Officer), E Fallows (Non-Portfolio Officer), Josh Bowker (Academic Officer), Sam Clark (Community and Student Rights Officer), Joe Levell (Finance Officer),

Non-Voting Members present:

Rosie Rawle (Ethical Issues Officer), Benjamin Brown (Environment Officer), T Gilder-Smith (Women's Officer), Derek Bowden (Chief Executive), John Taylor (Post Graduate Officer), Astrid Heidemann Simonson (International Officer), T Killeen (Mature Students Officer).

In attendance:

T Moore (Representation Support Worker).

Chair

Matthew Myles (Communications Officer).

Apologies for absence

Yousef Baboul (Ethnic Minorities Officer), Richard Laverick (LGBT Officer), Abbi Forsyth (Non-Portfolio Officer),

696 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October

The minutes of the 4 October meeting were agreed.

697 Action Log

SOC noted the completed actions. R Rawle noted she still had to confirm the measurements for the Green Success banner and would then pass the design to the Media Marketing Assistant.
Chair noted, concerning the Class Size and Module Choice question, that he had raised this at the HUM LTQC and had asked that Course Directors email their students for their views. He noted, however, that there was a detailed investigation underway by Learning and

Teaching Services and the LTQC Committee had decided to await the report from LTS before taking action.

J Lewis reported that 33 members had signed up and asked any Officers who wished to attend to remember to sign up.

Chair reported that the first three items had been tweeted.

S Clark reported, on Black History Month, that he had liaised with ENTS who were not planning any events but had indicated that they would happily put some on. However, ENTS had indicated that in the past BHM events had been sparsely attended. B Foday noted she had contacted the Afro-Caribbean Society and was still waiting for a response.

On the GOATing for the PCP, Chair reported that all the 40 students who were GOATed about the PCP indicated that they would be voting in future UUEAS elections.

Chair noted that the Higher Education Achievement Record had been raised in GOATing. E Fallows reported that this would be introduced this year by the University and would record all module results including those in the first year and that students had been unaware of this as they had been assuming that their first year did not count toward their degree classification.

Chair noted that HUM Teaching Directors had been unaware of the implementation of HEAR.

On the Christian Union's space allocation, J Levell noted he would be taking this to Societies Committee which he anticipated would ask for the CU's allocation to be withdrawn; he would then contact the CU.

S Clark reported, on the proposed chill out room, ENTs had advised that this would not increase capacity; however it would not increase event costs either. He noted that there would be a cost in providing seating which, if it were the same as elsewhere in the building, would cost approximately £1,400. Chair asked S Clark to investigate further and for Officers to contact S Clark with any suggestions as to furnishings.

Action

Chair noted that a report on cost implications of attendance at future conferences would be brought to the next meeting.

Action

698 Matters Arising

Chair noted that the issue of SOC communications had been raised at the last meeting. He proposed that a GoogleDoc facility be created where all the SOC documents would be uploaded at 5 pm on a Tuesday. He noted that there were sometimes difficulties with extra documents being too large to be sent by email.

T Killeen argued that adding another medium for SOC communications would only further complicate matters for Officers who would have to log in to yet another site to gain access. He noted, at the last few meetings, participants had reported they had not known where specific documents were to be found. He argued that there should be just one medium.

After a detailed discussion by SOC of the relative merits of different

communications methods, Chair summarised the debate as: SOC were in agreement that there should be only one communications channel but were divided as to whether this should be Facebook or email. He, therefore, proposed that this be put to a vote. SOC voted that Facebook would be its sole internal communications channel.

Action

699 Student Officer Action Plan Update

Chair asked that Officers inform him of their updates before 5pm on Tuesdays.

B Foday reported she had been liaising with the University over a career fair at UEA London on 6 November. She noted that two coaches, paid for by NBS, would be going from Norwich and that 150 students had signed up.

B Brown noted, in discussions with other members of the Go Green Campaign, it had been raised that none of cups used in the bars were recyclable. He believed that it was important that UUEAS switch to biodegradable cups. S Clark noted that there were not the facilities available for recycling plastics. B Brown believed that alternative corn starch based cups could be used; thus avoiding the need for recycling oil based plastic. He noted there would be a cost implication with quotes of four times the cost of plastic; however, he noted that other SUs used biodegradable cups and he would be investigating as to their approach.

J Levell reported that the whole issue of recycling had been brought up at Management Committee and was under consideration by Senior Managers..

E Fallows noted that the Livewire Union Radio Show was broadcast between 5 and 6 pm and asked any Officers wanting to contribute to contact him.

B Brown reported the success of the On Ya Bike events, particularly the bike maintenance workshops. He would be updating SOAP to include year round publicity for the workshops with the idea that once the requisite numbers had been signed up then workshops would be run in response. He noted that the funding for these would need to be considered in the future.

700 Items for Tweeting and Items for Videoing

A Simonson – the petition on changes to the visa rules for international students in the UK, particularly the post-study work visa. J Taylor believed this should be communicated to the Vice-Chancellor. S Clark noted that the FTOs would be meeting the VC on the following Monday and would raise the matter with him.

R Rawle – launch of the Lens.

Action

701 What We Have Been Doing Blogs

Chair noted that as these were now only posted to the Facebook page; they were not, therefore, strictly 'blogs' and would be titled in future, 'diaries'.

Chair reported that the Student Experience Report had been sent to print. He noted, also, that he had had a useful meeting with the PVC Academic to discuss a possible new UUEAS post for representation and quality assurance.

J Levell reported that Club and Society training had now been completed.

Chair noted that nominations for the by election for the post of Students with Disabilities Officer post had been high, possibly as a result of the helpful email sent out to all self-defining students by DOS. However, the hustings and voter turnout had been low and he urged Officers to publicise the poll.

S Clark noted that the CommUnity newsletter had been published and he had received positive feedback from the local, Labour, City Councillor.

702 GOATing Topics

Chair noted that the template topics for the week were elections and democracy and that a time schedule would be posted on Facebook. J Taylor asked that if, during GOATing, Officers met PG students they might raise the topic of PG library provision and the forthcoming elections to the GSA Committee. He would write a short briefing for GOATing.

Action

J Bowker reported, on PG matters, that he had raised the issue of post viva library access for PG students with the University and that the matter would be resolved.

703 Loyalty Cards

J Levell reported that a UUEAS Loyalty Card tied into the NUS Extra Card would be in place by January.

He asked for Officers thoughts on the scheme and how students would be rewarded and how loyalty to values of the Union and use of commercial services would be integrated into the scheme.

He had been in discussions with a commercial organisation, Salesforce, and had noted the amount of data that UUEAS would be able to track and which would aid demographic and market research.

He noted he would set up a discussion forum for Officers on the SOC Facebook page.

A Simonson noted her own, personal, suspicions of loyalty cards and their ability to track an individual and she believed her suspicions would be shared by some other students. She wondered whether there was the possibility of having a paper written card that was disposable and not subject to tracking.

J Levell took this point but argued that the scheme's ultimate aim was not to track students but to reward them. He noted that he would look into producing a paper, non-track able alternative but administering this as a system would be extremely complex.

A Simonson believed it was important that UUEAS would inform students that data obtained from the use of the card would be stored

and analysed.

R Rawle thought it a strange concept that volunteering hours would be subject to a kind of valuation and subsequent reward.

J Levell noted that this was a complex area and that further conversations to ensure the right approach to volunteering in the scheme would need to take place.

704 Report on the Priority Campaigns Poll

Chair thanked the Officers for helping publicise the poll that had registered 16,000 endorsements.

Both J Taylor and A Simonson commented on the massive success in raising awareness of the Priority Campaigns amongst the membership that the polling strategy had brought.

R Rawle asked that next year more information, possibly in booklet form, should be made available to members about the individual campaigns. She noted the importance of ensuring that the information on each campaign was fully up to date.

Action

705 The University's formulation of a Faith Policy

Chair noted that, following their postponement of the closure of the Islamic Centre, the University had decided to think in more strategic terms about issues of faith on campus and now wished to consult with students on these matters. He reported that the University had asked Officers to get representatives of different faith groups to submit written responses of up to 1,500 words detailing what they perceived to be the needs of their particular faith on campus. He noted that the original proposal had involved UUEAS representing the views of faith groups but that the FTOs had decided it was better for the faith group's to present their own views directly.

Chair reported that surveys had shown that there were over 500 students who defined their faith as 'other' than the main religious groupings and he believed it was important these students were consulted.

Chair asked that SOC make a decision whether to make its own response to the University, or submit a policy to Union Council or whether it should simply ask the faith groups to respond without any proposals by SOC to the University. He noted his own recommendation would be that SOC should take a policy proposal to Council that the University should provide a facility on campus that would meet the needs of differing faith groups.

J Taylor believed that it would be difficult for SOC to reach a consensus on a policy proposal.

Chair thought the question for SOC could be simply reduced to whether there was any place for faith on campus or there was a place and that SOC had to ensure that the needs of those UUEAS members who belonged to faith groups were met.

J Lewis argued that a twin track approach should be taken with a general policy proposal to be sent to Council and faith groups to be encouraged to submit responses to the University.

Chair argued that SOC should agree that there was a place for faith

on campus and that principle should be the basis of a policy proposal to be sent to Council.

A Simonson argued that SOC's duty was to represent students and that, as International Officer, her constituency contained many students for whom a faith facility represented a safe environment which was of utmost importance for their sense of well-being.

J Taylor agreed as to this need but argued that the policy proposal should come from Council and not from SOC. He was not comfortable with SOC making a decision that there should be facilities for faith on campus as, he argued, a decision like this should be made by Council.

T Killeen argued that SOC should approach this issue carefully as it not only represented students with faith but also the large number of students with no faith. He believed it was up to the faith groups, themselves, to propose a policy to Council.

B Foday argued that SOC should be able to recommend a policy proposal.

A Simonson argued that the vast majority of students with no faith valued the cultural diversity that having a variety of faith groups on campus brought to life at UEA.

Chair thought that the way forward would be to decide on two questions. Firstly, SOC could decide whether one of its members should write a written response as part of the University's consultation and then SOC as a whole endorse it. Secondly, whether SOC should encourage members of faith groups to propose policy to Council.

T Killeen noted that every student had been encouraged to respond to the consultation and, therefore, he believed there was no need for SOC to formulate its own response.

A Simonson wondered whether it would be possible for SOC to just ask Council to debate the matter rather than to submit a policy proposal. Chair thought it would be better practice to submit a specific proposal.

J Taylor noted that he was in the process of drafting his own personal response to the University and this would go straight to the University and not via SOC as he believed this not to be an issue for SOC.

Chair noted that as SOC as a body represented all students it was right for SOC to consider whether it should submit a response on behalf of all students. However, he felt that the current discussion showed there was no consensus amongst Officers on this issue.

SOC agreed that there should be no consultative response to the University by SOC as a body and that the matter of a policy proposal to Council should be left for consideration to the meeting of the faith groups with the Chair of SOC to be held on 22 October.

Chair noted that Officers were very welcome to attend this meeting.

Action

J Taylor reported, as an addendum to this item, that his search in public documents had revealed that the University had applied to extend the temporary planning permission for the Islamic Centre until June 2014. He further noted that the University's application would now be considered by Norwich City Council.

706 Campaign Sub-Committee Updates

J Lewis reported on the TUC demo that there were some problems as to the drop off point which would be near the O2 Arena and which would involve an onward tube journey. She also noted that there would be a £50 parking fee for the coach.

She noted that SOC would need to consider funding for the onward tube journey,

T Moore advised that a similar situation had arisen last year and SOC had approved funding.

SOC approved funding for members' tube travel and asked J Lewis to liaise with the Travel Shop over purchasing a group ticket beforehand.

J Lewis agreed to A Simonson's suggestion to create a specific event Facebook page for the demo with links to the SOC and other pages.

J Lewis noted that a campaign meeting had considered the publicity for the November NUS demo and that they had concluded that the NUS slogan, 'EDUCATE, EMPOWER, EMPLOY' was unclear as well as being anodyne, slick and corporate. She noted that the campaign had decided upon a more robust, direct approach with the theme of 'NO MORE LIES'.

S Clark noted that the theme would reflect the lies told by a succession of politicians from Mr Cameron, through those of Mr Clegg on tuition fees to earlier ones told by Mr Charles Clarke. He noted that part of the theme would be 'Cameron's Top Ten Lies About the NHS.'

B Brown reported, concerning the TUC demo, that there would be a feeder march for environmental activist groups.

A Simonson asked whether SOC needed permission to take the UUEAS banner to the demo as some students she had spoken to were unhappy with its presence at this type of demo.

Chair noted that the banner would be present because policy passed by Council had mandated SOC to support the demonstration. He believed that if members were unhappy with the policy they should seek to change it through Union Council.

R Rawle reported that 60 students had attended the successful launch of the Ethical Investment Campaign which had featured some great guest speakers including the founder of UK Uncut. She noted that UUEAS would be featured in UK Uncut's latest national press release for its success in changing to a more ethical banking services provider.

J Taylor reported that he had missed last week's SOC because of his commitments to the social events for arriving PG students. These had been extremely successful and would be a regular future arrivals feature. He thanked T Killeen for his hard work and role in making the events so successful.

Chair noted that the campaigns could celebrate their successes by uploading photos and other material to the blog.

707 Budget and Spending Update

A Simonson reported that on the 26 October there would be an NUS training day for International Officers that she would like to attend. She apologised for raising this at this meeting without a written funding request as she had just heard about the event.

SOC approved A Simonson's request.

Action

708 Any Other Business

J Bowker reported that Save UEA Music were to hold a commemorative event to mark the anniversary of their formation. He asked to submit a verbal funding request for £78 for badges and a banner.

SOC approved the request with the funds to come from the Fees and Cuts Campaign fund.

Action

Chair reminded Officers that it was important to adhere to best practice, whenever possible, and to submit written funding requests as agenda items and not to just raise them during a meeting.

Chair reported that on the day before there had been an incident in the Hive. This had involved a protest against an accountancy firm, Grant Thornton. He noted that the FTOs would be conducting an investigation and would be interviewing those Officers who were present.

709 Time, Date and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at 5 pm on Thursday, 18 October.