

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

21 March 2013

Summary

Key Discussions

- Lack of consultation with PTOs over arrangements for Officer Training and perceived exclusion of students working to non-standard academic timetable from UUEAS activities

Key Actions

- Funding of up to £400 agreed for transport to demo in solidarity with anti-privatisation occupation at the University of Sussex
- Membership Services Manager to investigate the feasibility of holding residential training type events on campus at weekends in order that no Officer would be excluded due to academic work commitments.
Funding of up to £390 agreed to send up to nine UUEAS activists as well as the incoming Ethical Issues Officer and Environmental Officer to the People and Planet Summer Gathering
Funding of up to £330 agreed to send International Officer and International Officer Elect to NUS International Conference

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.



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Voting Members present:

Eliot Fallows (Non Portfolio Officer), Joe Levell (Finance Officer), John Taylor (Post Graduate Officer), Benjamin Brown (Environment Officer), Jess Lewis (Non-Portfolio Officer), Hussam Hussein (Ethnic Minorities Officer), Astrid Heidemann Simonson (International Officer), Sam Clark (Community and Student Rights Officer), Abbi Forsyth (Non Portfolio Officer), Josh Bowker (Academic Officer), Trevor Killeen (Mature Students Officer), Tess Gilder-Smith (Women's Officer).

Chair

Richard Laverick (LGBT Officer).

Non-Voting Member:

Luke Gilbert (Interim Chief Executive).

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker), Emma Silk (Environment Officer Elect), Lauren Sloan (Ethical Issues Officer Elect), Ella Gilbert (Non Portfolio Officer Elect), Joe Raynes (Non Portfolio Officer Elect), Sebastian Bachelier (Non Portfolio Officer Elect), Freddie Meade (Non Portfolio Officer Elect), Holly Staynor (LGBT+ Officer).

Apologies:

Matthew Myles (Communications Officer), Kim Jenkins (Students with Disabilities Officer), Bintu Foday (Non-Portfolio Officer), Rosie Rawle (Ethical Issues Officer),

905 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March

The minutes were agreed.

906 Action Log

Chair noted the completed actions.

J Levell apologised that there had been no actions on the Safe Room
S Clark noted that he could not find any information for the Equal Opportunities Committee Report to the Trustees and he would be talking to HR about it. He believed the Report should come under the remit of HR rather than SOC.

B Brown noted that the RBS reply had been posted on the Facebook page and that R Rawle would be arranging the meeting with the Investment Society.

Chair noted there were no updates on the Strategic Plan.

J Bowker reported he had had no suggestions from Officers for the draft Student Charter; so he would work to complete the draft himself and submit it to SOC.

J Levell reported he would be ordering Officers' hoodies at training.

J Bowker noted the PVC Academic had come to Council at which some members of the new Officer team had been present.

J Levell noted there were no updates to be made on the 'Town Planning'.

Chair noted that a meeting with General Election candidates had been organised but no one had attended.

J Lewis noted she had attended the Bedroom Tax event.

J Taylor noted that he had not yet compiled the Report on PGs who teach.

J Levell reported, as to the costings for two observers at NUS Conference, that this would be £300 inclusive of accommodation but he was unsure whether this included VAT. He reported that two of next year's FTOs had been registered, as agreed. He noted that they had been decided by lottery and that he and R Rawle had been chosen to attend.

Chair noted that the Impact Report would be discussed on Facebook by the outgoing PTOs.

J Taylor reported that he had attended the public consultation on the new accommodation block. He noted that many members of the public were unhappy about the lack of clarity as to how construction traffic would access the site. He believed the University had failed to answer any questions on this subject at the meeting and the matter would continue to cause controversy amongst the local community.

907 Matters Arising

There were none.

908 Left in the Pot

Chair wondered whether the cost of the two observers' attendance had been split between Conferences and Campaigns.

J Levell agreed the money had been put together to fund this item. In answer to J Taylor, J Levell noted that the upcoming Officer Training would come from next year's Budget.

909 Solidarity with University of Sussex Students

J Lewis noted that students at Sussex University had occupied the conference centre on campus in protest at the University's attempt to privatise all non-teaching services. She believed that the University had acted without any prior consultation and in a very undemocratic manner. She noted that the occupiers had called for a national demonstration in support of their actions and had asked students from across the country to come to Sussex. She noted the demo had been called for 25 March and the funding request was for the hire of a mini-

bus to take UUEAS members to the demo. She noted that all UUEAS mini-buses were in use on the day and that the cost of hire would be £400.

T Killeen asked whether public transport alternatives had been looked into.

J Lewis noted the mini-bus cost per student would be about £25 and the cost of train travel would not be less than this. She noted that the mini-bus would only be used if enough students intended to go as members would then arrange their own transport.

H Hussein suggested that, in this case, UUEAS could subsidise members' transport costs.

SOC agreed to a funding request of up to £400 for members to attend the event.

Action

910 Scheduling of Residential Training

T Killeen noted that issues had arisen the previous year over the scheduling of residential training in that, any Officers whose studies were continuing were, effectively, excluded from training because it had been scheduled for weekdays. However, he noted that, despite a long discussion and subsequent agreement earlier in the year, the same schedule for residential training had been imposed again for 2013 with sessions scheduled for Monday to Wednesday when Officers from MED, including himself, would not be able to attend. He noted he had written to the Membership Services Manager, the Communications Officer and the Finance Officer and they had replied that they had had difficulties booking a hotel on a Saturday and that to change suppliers would be prohibitively expensive. He noted he did not accept this response as the situation had been known about for over a year and it had hardly come as a surprise. He noted his disbelief that there were no hotels in the area available at the weekend in the relevant period. He felt that what had occurred had underlined a key issue that UUEAS needed to urgently address: the fact that many of its members did not work within a standard academic timetable. He noted that many UUEAS meetings were scheduled when these members were working thus depriving them of the opportunity to fully take part in UUEAS activities.

He noted that members who had not been able to attend training last year had felt very much out of the loop as a lot of decisions had been taken during training which they had not been party to. He reminded SOC that UUEAS valued inclusivity and aimed to meet the needs of all its members.

Chair wondered what, given the present situation, T Killeen would like to see happen.

T Killeen reiterated his annoyance that the matter had not been addressed during the year as he had brought it up several times and that he was now being told that nothing could be done to change the situation and had been presented to him as a fait accompli.

T Gilder-Smith wondered whether it would be possible to change the structure of training and have day activities, for example, which were not residential.

T Killeen agreed this should be looked at and noted that one of the objections to weekend training had been that UUEAS did not have the money to spend. He wondered whether, if UUEAS did not have the money to run residential training properly; it should consider whether it should be doing it all. He wondered what the point of spending money on residential training was and whether the same ends might be met by alternative means at less cost.

A Simonson agreed with T Killeen and noted she had missed residential training. She believed attendance at training would present particular problems for International Officers who would often have to book flights abroad. She believed it would be far better to reschedule training for on campus rather than make some Officers miss out.

T Killeen noted that he felt training had been arranged on weekdays for the convenience of others at the expense of those who had been deliberately excluded due to their academic timetable.

He asked that the training dates be re-arranged.

J Taylor agreed and noted his recollection that Officers had been aware of this issue for over a year.

J Levell noted that the hotel that had been booked was extremely popular and, he had been informed, was significantly cheaper than others in the area.

T Killeen argued that the bottom line was training should have been arranged earlier and the present arrangements excluded some members. In his case, he had no choice; he had to go to lectures. He noted UUEAS' bafflement as to why FMH students did not engage with them and noted the present discussion was a perfect explanation for why those students did not engage: their needs were not considered. He noted he had asked for a group to be formed to plan the dates for training but this had not happened and decisions had been made solely by FTOs and UUEAS staff.

T Gilder-Smith argued that the new PTOs should have their say on the matter. A member of the new Officer Team expressed their complete agreement with T Killeen's argument.

SOC agreed to ask T Cunningham to investigate the feasibility of holding residential training type events on campus at weekends in order that no Officer would be excluded due to academic work commitments.

Action

911 Part Time Officers' Handbook

Chair noted that he would ask M Myles to email Officers concerning their contribution to the Handbook.

912 Management Committee Minutes

SOC received the minutes of the 25 February meeting.

Chair asked for an update on HERA.

J Levell reported that the University had withdrawn their support for the HERA process and UUEAS was looking at doing this in house.

913 Any Other Business

B Brown submitted an emergency funding request which he noted he had posted on Facebook. He noted that, each July, People and Planet held their Summer Gathering, a five day event which involved skills training for activists and networking opportunities for students campaigning on ethical and environmental issues. He noted the funding would allow up to nine UUEAS activists to attend as well as the incoming Ethical Issues Officer and Environmental Officer. He noted there were no training opportunities available for the latter Officers at NUS Conferences and the Gathering would represent a significant training opportunity for them.

He noted the request would be for £30 per person and for £60 to cover the two Officers' attendance.

SOC approved funding of up to £390.

Action

A Simonson noted it had been informally agreed that she and her successor should attend the NUS International Conference and that the Chair had agreed she could make a verbal funding request to the meeting. She noted the total cost for attendance and transport for herself and her successor would be £330.

Action

J Levell asked that the FTO's thanks to the departing PTOs for their incredibly hard work be minuted. He welcomed the new PTOs and wished them good luck during their time in office.

914 Time, Date and Place of Next Meeting

5 pm, Thursday 18 April in the Board Room.

Officers were reminded that it was UUEAS policy not to refer to week numbers as referenced by the standard academic year but to refer to 'week commencing' so as not discriminate against students, particularly on vocational courses working to a non-standard timetable.