

Union of UEA Students Purpose:

"To enrich the life of every UEA student"



Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

26 September 2013

Summary

Key Discussions

- Arrangements for Activism Teams
- Whether to have People and Planet Training for Activists
- Use of advertising space in UUEAS' poster boxes
- Student representatives on academic appeals panels
- Examined the process of how the decision to make the bars and non-ticketed public events student only was reached

Key Actions

- Election of Chair and Deputy Chair, Deputy Chair to be Clerk
- Agreed Funding of up to £160 to send up to 10 members to the National Demonstration at the Conservative Party Conference
- Campaigns Budget to be advertised as an open funding pot to be launched at the first Campaigns Forum.
- Steering group for Campaigns Teams programme established
- Funding of £345 for Priority Campaigns Poll leaflets

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Voting Members present:

Tu An Ngo (International Officer), Ella Gilbert (Non Portfolio Officer), Rachel Knott (Women's Officer), Bintu Foday (Community and Student Rights Officer), Joe Levell (Finance Officer), Eunice Opare-Addo (Ethnic Minorities Officer), Lauren Sloan (Ethical Issues Officer), Sebastian Bachelier (Non Portfolio Officer), Rosie Rawle (Communications Officer), Louise Withers Green (Academic Officer), Freddie Meade (Non-Portfolio Officer), Daniel Delargy (Students with Disabilities Officer), Emma Silk (Environment Officer), Trevor Killeen (Mature Students Officer).

Non-Voting Member present:

Jim Dickinson (Chief Executive).

Chair

Joe Raynes (Non Portfolio Officer).

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker), T Cunningham (Membership Services Manager).

Apologies:

Kimberley Hirst-Jones (Postgraduate Officer), Holly Staynor (LGBT+ Officer).

983 Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

SOC agreed that the role of Chair would alternate every 6 weeks.
SOC agreed that the role of Deputy Chair would include that of Clerk to the Committee with the responsibility of ensuring that papers were submitted on time and that action points were followed up.
SOC elected J Raynes as Chair for a six week period, after which the process would be formally reviewed.
SOC elected T Killeen as Deputy Chair to serve for the academic year.
SOC requested that a short paper outlining the relationship between the Chair and Deputy Chair roles be prepared for the next meeting.

Action

984 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2013

The minutes were agreed.

985 Action Log

J Dickinson advised that, as to the restriction on entry to licensed premises, only external feedback had been received; there had been no student feedback.

L Stone argued that a phrase in the staff guidance document, 'Principles regarding Entry to Union Licensed Premises', should be changed as she believed it to be inappropriate. She proposed that "groups of young adults" be changed to "groups of people".

R Rawle noted that the phrase had not been included in the Press Release that she had issued.

SOC agreed to request the above change of wording.

Action

986 Matters Arising

There were none.

987 Staff Guidance on Restriction of Access to UUEAS Licensed Premises

Note: this matter had been covered in discussion of the Action Log.

990 National Demonstration at the Conservative Party Conference

E Gilbert asked that this item be discussed at this stage as she would need to leave the meeting early to attend a course lecture.

T Killeen believed it would be difficult to discuss individual funding requests without having received a report on the Campaigns Budget.

J Dickinson advised he would discuss with the Finance Manager as to what kind of financial reporting would be most appropriate for SOC.

J Levell argued that E Gilbert's funding request fitted very clearly with UUEAS policy and mission and, as the amount was not inordinate in terms of the Campaigns Budget and the matter was urgent, the request should be granted.

E Gilbert noted that there would be no cost for students if the request were refused as the coach would be paid for by Norwich Trades Council but that the Council was not well funded and a contribution by UUEAS would be helpful.

L Sloan asked that, for attendance at future events, a system should be investigated that would estimate the cheapest means of transport available.

SOC agreed to fund attendance at the event for up to 10 members at a cost of up to £160.

Action

988 Students' Assembly Against Austerity

E Gilbert reported that she had spoken with L McCafferty and he did have any more information than that available online. She noted she would investigate further and bring the matter back to a future meeting.

Action

989 Activism Teams

Officers expressed their general approval of the briefing paper in an atavistic non-verbal manner.

SOC agreed that they would be interested in receiving training to run Campaign Teams.

SOC agreed to the proposal to advertise the Campaigns Budget as an open funding pot to be launched at the first Campaigns Forum.

Action

R Rawle noted that the sessions would take at least half a day.

R Rawle asked that SOC consider the question of who should provide the training: UUEAS staff members, NUS or People and Planet. She noted that the first two options were free and that People and Planet training would cost between, roughly, £500 and £1,000. She believed the latter option would be most cost effective as, in her experience, it would provide far more effective training than the others. She noted that the money could come from the Training Budget as well as the Campaigns Budget but noted that, if it came from the Training Budget it would reduce the amount available for attendance at conferences, including NUS Zone Conferences.

J Levell noted the amount that UUEAS paid NUS in affiliation fees and thought it would be good to have a detailed breakdown of People and Planet's training services.

R Rawle noted that the details of NUS and People and Planet training were almost identical but that she believed People and Planet's service delivery to be far superior.

L Sloan endorsed this view in that, in her own experience, People and Planet training had been highly effective.

T Killeen suggested using NUS for the initial training of Officers and then having People and Planet come into train the larger number of members who would be attending the end of campaign Forum.

R Rawle argued that the more effective training should be delivered at the start of the campaigns not in a final, celebratory conference.

SOC agreed that Officers availability to attend training would be ascertained and the costs of People and Planet training discussed on Facebook over the following week and a decision as to whether to use People and Planet's services would be made at the next meeting. SOC agreed to establish a steering group, for the development of the Campaigns Teams programme, to comprise of L Sloan, B Foday, T Killeen and R Rawle.

Action

991 Priority Campaign Poll Leaflets

R Rawle thanked Officers for their approval of this item via Facebook, earlier in the week.

SOC formally agreed to the funding request of £345.

992 Any Other Business

R Rawle thanked Officers for all their work during Arrivals and Induction Talks.

T Killeen asked that Officers make commitments to work specific shifts during the PCP week.

T Killeen asked that SOC consider how to best work with the Action Log in future.

SOC agreed to consider this matter in the Open Discussion and that a proposal would be brought to the next meeting.

Action

B Foday noted that to follow on to the PCP she had organised a revised version of Meet Your Officer to be called 'Officers On Tour' which only GOATing would be structured as to times and venues. She noted that this would take place three times a month and the venues would include the Hubs and UEA London. She noted she would put a timetable on the Facebook page and asked Officers to sign up for time slots. She noted that the visit to UEA London would be on 8 October and that Officers would need to decide what issues specific to UEA London they should use to engage with students.

T Killeen noted there would also be a timetable for PCP slots.

SOC agreed their preferred format for signing up to slots would be Doodle but noted that this would not be viable for a timetable with multiple venues.

Action

R Rawle welcomed J Dickinson to his first SOC meeting.

J Dickinson noted he was in the process of formulating his initial thoughts on the organisation and he would present these to SOC to obtain Officers' feedback. He noted the importance of both SOC and Council to the shaping of future strategy.

SOC agreed that J Dickinson would make an informal presentation at the beginning next meeting, in place of the Officers' Activities Sharing section.

Action

J Levell noted that he did not think the Open Space Discussion at the end of each meeting had been productive and that he would be bring a proposal to the next meeting that this item should be discontinued.

L Withers Green noted that ENTS controlled the content of the poster boxes outside Union House. She reported that J Spiro, Student Support Services Manager, had asked for Exam Feedback posters to be put up but had been informed that this was not possible as the spaces were all needed to advertise commercial entertainments.

L Withers Green requested that SOC ask ENTS to reconsider this matter.

J Dickinson advised it would be somewhat unusual for SOC to try to resolve this specific question but what SOC could resolve was the general question that the use of UUEAS communications channels should represent a balance between the commercial and the non-commercial concerns and that, in the development of the communications plan for the term ahead, the Communications and Marketing Manager should reflect this balance when considering

promotional opportunities.

L Withers Green reported that the University had requested that a student representative should be part of the team that considered academic appeals. She welcomed the idea of wider representation but she had been advised that students, when sitting on academic appeals panels, tended to be harsher in their judgements on fellow students and this would have a detrimental effect on UUEAS members. She asked for SOC's views on the University's proposal.

Chair believed, if one were to have a student representative on a panel, one should not try to second guess how they would act.

T Killeen believed this would be an important development in representation.

B Foday noted that she, herself, sat on the Parking Appeals Panel and she did not believe her judgements were unduly harsh or detrimental to students.

S Bachelier noted that there would be a process of election.

L Withers Green believed that, in fact, the student would be appointed not elected. She noted she had informed the University that she would be in favour of the proposal, dependent on the approval of SOC and with the provisos that the student was remunerated and received training.

J Dickinson advised it was important to know whether the University was seeking an expert student with detailed knowledge of the University's regulations or an ordinary student who might be seen as undertaking a sort of 'jury service' as a representative of 'ordinary' students.

L Withers Green agreed that this would be an important consideration that she would discuss with the University; she would bring the results of these discussions back to SOC.

Action

L Sloan asked whether there had been any response from HR as to the number of students who had fed back on residential training.

A Moore advised that there had been no response from HR to his request for this information and that he would follow this matter up.

Action

L Sloan asked whether the recent Management Minutes were now available.

R Rawle reported that one meeting had taken place that had not been minuted and she would be compiling notes of the meeting and would be circulating these for approval; they would then be published.

A Moore advised he believed Management Committee had met the previous day and they would have approved the minutes of the meeting, subsequent to the un-minuted meeting mentioned by R Rawle. He noted he would ask whether these available for next week's SOC agenda.

Action

L Sloan believed it would be desirable for SOC to have a broad discussion as to process. She thought the issue of process had been reified by the restriction on entry decision and she believed it was important that SOC debated the nature of collective responsibility. She believed Officers should be able to voice criticisms of a policy decision rather than, as at the last meeting, being asked to repeat the Union's line by pointing members to a press release. She argued that, on the restriction on entry decision, it had not been clear who had made the decision and whether SOC should have had any involvement in the decision making process.

J Davidson advised that the line between what SOC, as a body, should decide and what Management Committee, as a body, should decide, had become blurred. He advised that the position was so uncertain he did not know which proposals he should take to SOC and which to Management. He noted he would be working on, taking to the November meeting of the Trustees, recommendations as to establishing clarity on where decisions were made in the organisational structure and this would mean that Officers when they were unhappy with a decision would know where and how to raise it. Chair noted it was, at present, difficult for Officers to disassociate themselves with a decision, made elsewhere in the organisation, that they did not agree with.

J Davidson advised that in the interim, before his formulation of recommendations, the default position should be that issues that have multiple staffing and political ramifications should be taken to both SOC and Management Committee. He further advised Officers to take a note of issues which they believed should have come to SOC and had not and, also, vice versa; as often SOC might be asked to consider issues which Officers might not feel to be relevant. He asked that they discuss this with him so he might feed forward their ideas into his recommendations. He believed the crucial point was that Officers should be able to defend what had been done in their name.

L Sloan wondered as to the Officers' position if they were asked by Council to explain the decision making process regarding restriction on entry; she noted that she would feel uncomfortable defending the decision. She added her concerns were not about the issue itself but the process in regard to decision making. She felt that students might question why they bothered to elect Officers when Officers did not, actually, make the decisions.

T Killen argued that, although there had been mistakes made as to decision making, one should not be overly negative as this might undermine SOC's credibility.

J Levell believed that, if the FTOs had had more time and if there had been a SOC meeting scheduled the restriction on entry decision, would have come to SOC. However, the FTOs had had to make an immediate decision; he believed the situation had not been ideal but that he would defend the decision that had been made.

Chair asked why, as there was no SOC meeting scheduled, the question had not been posted on the SOC Facebook page.

J Levell agreed this was a valid point.

T Killeen noted that had been no attempt to call an emergency meeting of SOC.

R Rawle thought the decision making had not been handled well: the decision had been made in a Management Committee meeting where no minutes had been taken and which had been convened in a corridor of Union House.

J Dickinson advised that UUEAS was, at present, in a constitutional position in which there were tasks that the Trustee Board were required to undertake and there was a set of different tasks that SOC were required to undertake. He noted that there was a grey area in between these defined areas and that this area needed to be examined as it would be impossible, organisationally, to take everything to, both, the Trustees and to SOC. He thought the result of the latter situation would be a mess, with the Trustees becoming involved in the politics and Officers being asked to consider the details of finance and staffing. He believed that UUEAS had to develop a streamlined effective system of governance.

L Sloan noted she did not want SOC's reaction to be one of let us learn from this and move on. She believed the issue to be of critical importance as none of the PTOs had known what had been going on. She believed the issue was, also, one of training. PTOs had not been told anything as to the remit and make-up of the Trustee Board and its place in the decision making process. She thought it was all very well to speak of blurred lines but she characterised the situation as simply not good enough.

Chair believed the difference between Officers might be put as viewing the issue as one of strategy or as one of procedure: in that SOC might be responsible for the bar staff having breaks but not when they took them. He noted that SOC had seen the restriction on entry decision as a strategic one because of its political implications.

J Dickinson advised that UUEAS would have to learn from this incident not in a superficial way but in a fundamental way that would lead to procedural change.

993 Time, Date and Place of Next Meeting

5 pm, Thursday 3 October in the Student Officer Centre and the Board Room.