

Union of UEA Students Purpose:

“To enrich the life of every UEA student”



Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

27 March 2014

Summary

Key Discussions

- UCU Marking Boycott
- Budget for 2014-15

Key Actions

- Exit interviews to be conducted with the PTOs
- FAQs on marking boycott to be circulated to students and a template letter to the VC would be drafted for circulation
- Officers asked to identify how any extra money could be spent to improve services to their constituents

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Voting Members present:

Eunice Opare-Addo (Black & Ethnic Minorities Officer), Tu An Ngo (International Officer), Rachel Knott (Women's Officer), Ella Gilbert (Non Portfolio Officer), Rosie Rawle (Communications Officer), Sebastian Bachelier (Non Portfolio Officer), Joe Levell (Finance Officer), Emma Silk (Environment Officer), L Withers Green (Academic Officer), Freddie Meade (Non Portfolio Officer), Bintu Foday (Community and Student Rights Officer), D Delargy (Students' with Disabilities Officer).

Chair

Joe Raynes (Non Portfolio Officer).

Voting Members present:

J Dickinson (Chief Executive).

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker).

Apologies:

Sebastian Bachelier (Non Portfolio Officer), Holly Staynor (LGBT+ Officer), Kimberley Hirst-Jones (Postgraduate Officer).

1174 Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2014

The minutes were agreed.

1175 Matters Arising

There were none.

1176 Action Log

R Rawle noted she had conducted the exit interview with the Mature Students' Officer who had raised concerns about Officer induction and training; she believed this information should be used to inform next year's training.

SOC agreed that exit interviews or a group interview would be held

before the end of the exam period for the current PTOs.

1177 Officers on Livewire Union Show

To appear next week: J Raynes, J Levell and L Withers Green.

1178 UCU Industrial Action: Marking Boycott

R Rawle circulated the FAQs, she had drawn up, for circulation to members explaining the reasons behind UCU's action and UUEAS' support. She noted that the University had commented that it would understand that students could be disappointed with UUEAS' point of view. She noted the focus group had looked at practical points to help students as follows:

UCU members to work with SOC on joint campaigning

Facilitating open lectures by UCU members

Preparatory work with the Advice Centre workers

Updates on the UCU/employers negotiations to be published on the Blog

A gradual introduction of posters and flyers, pop-up stands in the Hive

Getting the message out through course reps

Template letters to be sent to the VC and letters to be provided for academic staff to explain to students the reason for the action.

R Rawle noted that information would be available for postgraduate students who might be asked to mark papers thus undermining their UCU colleagues.

R Rawle noted to an inquiry from the Chair that the University had not shown any indications of when they would start to communicate with students about the boycott.

SOC agreed the text of the FAQs and its circulation to students and that a template letter to the VC would be drafted for circulation. SOC agreed that it would be made clear that the dispute was national and not local. It was further agreed that the issues of UCU staff having their pay cut would be addressed and that student reps on University committees would be asked to raise the issue of the boycott in meetings.

SOC noted that graduation at UEAS was a lot earlier than across the sector thus the potential for disruption of student progression was significantly greater.

T A Ngo noted that her constituents would be hit disproportionately by any disruption as their travel plans would be affected drastically.

R Rawle noted the importance of explaining UUEAS' support for the action in terms of an emphasis on the responsibility of the employers and the need to channel the members' anger against those responsible: the University and not the lecturers. She believed the key argument to make to members was that the boycott would go ahead anyway without UUEAS' support and that UUEAS would try to help resolve it before it began.

1179 Block Grant Funding 2014-15

J Dickinson advised that the new Democratic Procedures Committee would be responsible for drafting a process for SOC and Council to input into the Budget formulation. He noted, however, that the DPC had not

met and, therefore, and he would like to ask the present PTOs as to their ideas as to the detailed Budget for the charity. He noted that there would probably be a 2-3% staff pay rise which would have a significant impact; as would, also, the rise in utilities prices and increased pensions' costs. He noted that there would be a review of insurance which he believed would mean a rise in costs.

He advised, however, that there were areas where spending could be significantly reduced; one such was building maintenance which could be drastically reduced in the run-up to the total refurbishment of Union House. He advised that these reductions would release some money to meet some of the desires expressed by Officers for staff support or campaigns and projects funding.

J Levell asked in view of the above advice for Officers to consider where, if they had it, they could spend money on to improve services for their constituents. He asked Officers to email him their responses before the following meeting.

1180 Policies Passed by Union Council on 20 March

1547: B Foday noted that a new Equal Opportunities framework was being planned for staff and that the Equal Opportunities Committee was looking at how to train the EO champions for Clubs and Societies. She noted she would be liaising with the University's Equality and Diversity Committee over the new policy.

1552: J Levell noted conversations had already started with the University on bursaries and he would be leading on liaison with Outreach as to working with local schools.

1553: B Foday noted she would work with the Advice Centre on advertising the dangers of loan shark lending.

1554: SOC noted no progress had been made so far and appointed B Foday and J Levell to raise awareness of the NASMA petition.

1555: J Levell noted it would be for his successor to ensure that, working along with the EOC, that adequate Equal Ops training was in place.

1556: L Withers Green noted she would write the open letter to the University in support of the OFT ruling.

1157: R Rawle noted that there had been some obfuscation by the University over Electronics Watch but that she would be talking to the Procurement Manager and she hoped for some progress on this issue during the coming year.

1160: J Levell noted he would be working to set up a joint committee with the University on sport after Easter.

1161: B Foday noted that the proposer how now been able to provide a definition for "sub-culture" which would be used in interpretation of the policy.

Chair noted that B Foday had circulated her DRO report prior to the meeting. B Foday noted that no candidates had come forward for the International Officer and Black and Ethnic Minorities positions. She noted her statement in the report that the vote represented what the members had voted for.

SOC noted the policy that mandated it to encourage more women to stand as candidates.

B Foday noted that she would bring a timetable for the By-Elections to SOC at its next meeting.

1181 Officer Go Round

L Withers Green: 100 things the VC could change, What If your course was better and working with the Faculty Convenors as to their handovers

R Rawle: marking boycott, the new Defend Education campaign which had evolved from Stop The Sell Off, Union Awards and preparing for the DPC

E Gilbert: Stop The Sell Off, UCU action. Elections

F Meade: marking boycott

E Silk: Stop The Sell Off and meetings with the University over Fossil Free investment

J Levell: discussions over Officers' roles at University Council, Union Awards, pre-meetings for NUS Conference

J Raynes: Union Awards which had led to a bizarre concatenation of events in his personal life

D Delargy: Stop The Sell Off and handover with his successor

E Opare-Addo: Union Awards and EOC.

TA Ngo: supporting and campaigning for UEA London students

B Foday: EOC, running the elections, Union Awards, the Access agreement for the May deadline and the Time to Change campaign

1182 Management Committee

SOC received the minutes of the meeting of 11 March without comment.

1183 Any Other Business

J Raynes reported that the government had ended ATOS's contract for disability tests and he noted this was a big victory for the disability rights campaign which UUEAS had been part of.

J Levell noted that some Officers might have missed the news of the grant from the Alumni Annual Fund towards a student media hub. He noted the funding would provide a large number of Macs with top of the range editing software.

1184 Time, Date and Place

5 pm, Thursday, 3 April in a venue to be confirmed.

SOC agreed that the new Officer team would be invited and the Annual Student Survey would be an agenda item.