

Union of UEA Students Purpose:

"To enrich the life of every UEA student"



Student Officer Committee Meeting

5. 30 pm, Thursday, 22 May 2014 in the Board Room, Union House

Agenda

FORMAL AGENDA ITEMS

- 1215 Minutes of the meeting held on 8 May**
 - 1216 Matters Arising**
 - 1217 Action Log** (See page x)
 - 1218 Election of Part Time Officer Trustees**
To elect two Part Time Officers to serve as Trustees.
 - 1219 Accommodation**
To discuss
 - 1220 Disabled Students Allowance**
To discuss
 - 1221 Welcome Week**
A discussion topic from the Chief Executive.
 - 1222 Officer Go Round**
Officers to detail their activities for inclusion in the SOC Report.
 - 1223 Any Other Business**
 - 1224 Time, Date and Place of Next Meeting**
- Note: There will be a training session to follow the formal agenda items**

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Minutes of the Student Officer Committee

8 May 2014

Summary

Key Discussions

- Zero Hours Contracts for student staff
- Emergency Union Council meetings
- Received reports on charges to Societies for using former Music School premises

Key Actions

- Student staff to be consulted on Zero Hours Contracts and results to be taken to Management Committee for consideration

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Minutes of the Student Officer Committee
8 May 2014

Voting Members present:

Liz Cody (Non Portfolio Officer), Tom Southerden (Non Portfolio Officer), Rosie Rawle (Communications Officer), Iain Goddard (Environment Officer), Theo Antoniou Phillips (Non Portfolio Officer), Max Levene (Students with Disabilities Officer), Louise Withers Green (Academic Officer), Oliver Steward (Postgraduate Officer), Josh Wilson (Ethical issues Officer), Joe Levell (Finance Officer).

Officers Elect present:

Chris Jarvis (Campaigns and Democracy Officer), Connor Rand (UG Education Officer)

Chair

Tom Etheridge (Non Portfolio Officer)

Non-Voting Members present:

None

In attendance:

Tony Moore (Representation Support Worker), T Cunningham (Deputy Chief Executive).

Apologies:

J Dickinson (Chief Executive), John Taylor (Mature Students Officer), Liam McCafferty (PG Education Officer elect), Dan Wrigglesworth (LGBT+ Officer), Bintu Foday (Community and Student Rights Officer), Dolly Ogunrinde (Women's Officer).

1208 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2014

SOC noted a typographical error; with this change, the minutes were agreed.

1209 Matters Arising

R Rawle noted that the marking boycott had been called off and she had issued a statement as agreed.

1210 Action Log

SOC noted the completed actions.

R Rawle noted, as to the University rent rise, that Concrete would be running this as a front page story. She thought that this might mean that students would ask questions of the Officers and she would post relevant information online.

C Jarvis noted that the local People's Assembly would be providing transport to the national event; he would be finding out the costs and bringing a funding request to the next meeting.

R Rawle noted she would be soon sending exit questionnaires to the former PTOs.

R Rawle noted that UUEAS' participation in the Day of Action had thrown up some contradictions as the Day's publicity material had been against Zero Hours Contracts and UUEAS employed student staff on these contracts. She noted she had had an online comment that UUEAS should put its own house in order before it took part in this sort of action; she believed this to be a valid point which could be looked at by Management Committee.

J Wilson noted that, additionally, UUEAS did not pay the Living Wage but that this was currently being looked at.

T Cunningham advised that there were discussions on the Budget to be had but it was hoped that UUEAS would be able to implement the Living Wage in September. As to Zero Hour Contracts, he advised that these were very popular with student staff and he wondered whether Officers might look at their application to non-student staff, only.

C Rand thought that to take away this flexibility from student staff would cause a backlash.

SOC agreed that student staff should be consulted on this issue and that the results would be taken to Management Committee for consideration.

R Rawle noted that, on the gender gap with regard to academic staff which was part of the UCU's demands, there had been no movement and this action point would, therefore, be closed.

1211 Management Committee

SOC noted receipt of the minutes of the meeting held on May 6.

J Levell, in the absence of B Foday, Chair of Management Committee, gave SOC an overview of the work of the Committee.

C Jarvis noted that the minutes noted that Deloitte's would be conducting an audit of UUEAS and he noted that Council had passed policy on tax avoidance which had specifically referenced this firm.

T Cunningham advised that Deloitte's were being brought in by the University to audit UUEAS' data compliance as part of the move toward data sharing and that the commissioning of this particular firm was a matter beyond UUEAS' control.

R Rawle noted that it might seem strange to new Officers that they received minutes from a Committee that they did not attend but that reading the minutes would give them an insight into the commercial services and enable Officers to hold UUEAS management to account.

1212 Officer Go Round

R Rawle: candidate training workshops, By Election preparation, PTO exit questionnaire.

J Wilson: concentrating on academic work.

O Steward: meeting with UUEAS to discuss help on the running of sports activities for the GSA. He noted that the GSA was looking at concentrating its efforts more on the social and welfare aspects of its activities. He noted that alongside the activities of the PG Education Officer, the GSA would be looking to focus on the promotion of equality and diversity. He noted he and other committee members were writing a new GSA constitution which would create two new committee positions: an equal opportunities officer and an activities and social inclusion officer. He reported that, sadly, there had been no candidates for the Secretary or other committee positions and by-elections would have to be held for these in the autumn.

T Southerden: concentrating on academic work.
M Levene: concentrating on academic work.
I Goddard: met with Student Support Services Manager over plans for Reduce, Re-use, Recycle for June and he noted the need for volunteers to work on the event and this would be advertised on social media.
L Cody: concentrating on academic work.
L Withers Green: the 'What if your course was better?' consultation to which there had been over 600 responses and preparing for her presentation for the Learning and Teaching Day.
C Rand: Learning and Teaching Day presentation.
J Levell: working on new committee agreements and constitutions for Sports Clubs, meetings on the Media Hub, discussions on SAM, lobbying Simon Wright MP over letting agents' charges.
T Antoniou Phillips: meeting with University over the future usage of the former Music School's premises. He noted that the University had, when they closed the School, given assurances that the premises would be available for students to make live music. He noted he had been asked by the Live Music Society to ensure that this would still be the case. He noted the University had confirmed to him that the premises would be available to students and the Orchestra. He noted the Society's further concern over the cost of using the premises and the hourly rate charged by the University and that he had proposed to the University that the Society should be able to use the premises free of charge. He noted that the University were considering the matter.
Chair: Livewire committee meeting on Welcome Week plans.

1213 Any Other Business

J Levell asked Officers to respond to his call for volunteers for a focus group on UUEAS' visual identity for brands and marketing.

R Rawle reported there would, probably, be an emergency meeting of Union Council called for the following week. She noted that this had been necessitated as there had been a call by the Trustees for a meeting to consider the Union incorporating and a petition from 16 members of Council had been received to consider a resolution on far-reaching reform to UUEAS democratic processes that there had not been time to consider at the last meeting of Council. She noted that the petition needed 4 more signatures and Officers were welcome to add their names to it.

L Withers Green asked as to the membership of Council for the emergency meeting.

T Moore advised that, after discussions, it had been decided to use the precedence of past practice and to use the membership roll for the last Council meeting but with the addition of the new Part Time Officers who had taken office at Easter.

SOC agreed that, as debate of any item was restricted to one hour, two separate meetings should take place and, if the required 20 signatures were collected, these meetings would take place consecutively on the evening of Thursday, 15 May.

Chair noted that there would be an 'Officers on Livewire' show the following week. O Steward and L Withers Green to appear.

1214 Time, Date and Place

SOC agreed that, as Council would be taking place on Thursday, to not

meet the following week.

5. 30 pm, Thursday, 22 May, with a training session to follow, in a venue to be confirmed.



SOC ACTION LOG (Internal Process)

Date Commissioned	Action Required	Status	Assigned To:	Date to be actioned by:
27 Feb 14 / 3 Apr 14/1 May 14	University Rents	Question of a rents campaign would be the subject of an open session at residential training.	Bintu	March
27 Mar 14	Exit interviews or a group interview would be held before the end of the exam period for the current PTOs.	Questionnaires sent	Rosie	End of May
3 Apr 14	Special session during training to discuss strategic spending and campaigning priorities both in the short and long term to be organised	To be actioned	Jim	End of May
1 May 14	Inquiries to be made with UCU as to whether any progress has been made on addressing the academic staff gender pay gap	Actioned – UCU will inform UUEAS on any progress	Rosie	End of May
1 May 14	Anti-Casualisation Day of Action	Actioned	Rosie	2 May
1 May 14	National People's Assembly	Funding request to be made	Chris	End of May
8 May 14	Election of Part Time Officer Trustees	Actioned Agenda item	Tony	22 May
8 May 14	Student staff to be consulted on 0 Hours Contracts	Consultations to be held; results to be sent to Management Committee	Joe	End of May

Defend Education UEA meeting 14/05/2014

BLUE - Updates from Defend Education Meeting 21/05/2014

RENT INCREASE FOR CAMPUS ACCOMODATION

As published in a recent edition of Concrete, university campus rent prices have been set to rise by an average of £158 per year. This decision has been made without serious consultation with the Student Union. Whilst we have been aware of the decision to increase these costs, Concrete's front-page cover story allows us to build momentum for another round of resistance against the final figures.

- **Our Demands:** The University should reverse its proposals to increase rent for the 2014/15 academic year. Any increase to rent should at the very least, be offset by national increases in government maintenance grants and loans*.

Our arguments/ message:

- **Students burdened for university profit:** With £9k fees, cuts to maintenance grants and possible cuts to disability allowances, students should not be forced to once again, reach into their pockets to fund the University's future capital investment plans. The University claim to make an addition £1m p.a. from this rent increase alone.
- **A barrier to widening access:** This increase is unacceptable and contradicts the university's aim of widening access to Higher Education.
- **Additional impact on disabled students:** Whilst there is already a shortage of reserved rooms for disabled students, this price increase will cause an additional barrier to their access. With the possibility of future cuts to DSA, these students will be doubly hit.
- **An unjustly calculated rise:** *Whilst government maintenance loans have increased to afford rising living costs, the amount has only risen by £35. In 2013/14, the total maintenance loan that could be received by a UEA student living away from home was £3575. For 2014/15, this figure is £3610.

Actions:

- To find out the annual expense for maintaining current accommodation, *and also where surplus is spent, the debt on current builds etc* (Rosie)
- To find out what level of information was given to incoming students and when (Rosie)
- To obtain the results from the Student Experience Survey (Bintu)
- To arrange a meeting with Senior University Management / propose an agenda point at the UUEAS-UEA Forum Meeting next week, and present the case above. *The Union met with the University at a Forum Meeting on the 21st May. We submitted a paper containing the above statements, and also a proposal for future recommendations (for example, around consultation, and also price setting). The process part has been received relatively well, but our stated opposition to the increase, has been only noted. It was suggested that the next step might be for Student Union Officers to raise this concern again at the University Council Meeting in June, as the budget still has to be confirmed with this body.*
- *To discuss and find out the impacts of this change on local private rented accommodation - Homerun might be a good start (Bintu)*
- *To find out more about concerns raised in Rehabilitation Sciences over their ability to pay rent (Bintu)*

It was also noted that if the response is unsatisfactory, it may be worth calling upon local politicians and student unions to stand against the increase. Also suggested - a giant game of Monopoly in the square.

Accommodation Strategy and Pricing- Union Recommendations

Introduction

Following concerns expressed earlier in the year the Union is making a series of recommendations in relation to accommodation costs.

The University has a key and leading role as a practice exemplar in this area, and generally whilst we would accept the basic financial assumptions of the University we believe that meeting these standards would require than a month's window of work in the autumn.

Union Formal Position

The Union's formal position is that the University should reverse its proposals to increase rent for the 2014/15 academic year. In our view any increase to rent should at the very least, be offset by national increases in government maintenance grants and loans.

- With £9k fees, cuts to maintenance grants and possible cuts to disability allowances, students should not be forced to once again, reach into their pockets to fund the University's future capital investment plans. The University claim to make an addition £1m p.a. from this rent increase alone.
- This increase is unacceptable and contradicts the university's aim of widening access to Higher Education.
- Whilst there is already a shortage of reserved rooms for disabled students, this price increase will cause an additional barrier to their access. With the possibility of future cuts to DSA, these students will be doubly hit.
- Whilst government maintenance loans have increased to afford rising living costs, the amount has only risen by £35. In 2013/14, the total maintenance loan that could be received by a UEA student living away from home was £3575. For 2014/15, this figure is £3610.

Process Recommendations

In addition to our formal position on the increase we have developed a series of recommendations in relation to rent setting process in the future which we think are highly constructive and uncontroversial:

Strategic development and affordability – university/union partnership working

1. The University should have a clear commitment to the student experience, ensuring it employs a balanced pricing strategy based on the importance of choice and real affordability.
2. Pastoral care and student welfare should continue to be prioritised and there should be a clear description of the care and support package offered to students at the time of letting.
3. The role of affordable accommodation in relation to access and widening participation should be acknowledged in the institution's strategy. A clear joined up approach between this process and the access agreement/widening access strategies should be employed to ensure that no student is excluded from a residential experience of education.

4. Not only should a range of rents be available, but there should be an agreed policy statement on the institutional definition of affordability to ensure that the lower end of the rental structure is genuinely affordable and represents a reasonable proportion of the options on offer.
5. When considering pricing, the issue of unmet demand for different types of accommodation should be taken into account.

Transparency

6. Where add-on services are provided, they should be clearly explained, free of ambiguity. These additions should also be based on clear demand and evidence of value for money rather than being based on assumptions of student expectations.
7. If administration or 'booking' fees are made these should only cover the cost of actual work undertaken. The University should consider why it charges additional fees to students for this particular piece of administration and not for most other administrative support which they give to students during their study lifecycle.
8. Where it is felt that upfront charges must be levied, these should be kept to a minimum and, where applicable, should not be required in advance of students receiving their first loan instalment.

Accreditation and standards

9. All staff working within accommodation should be familiar with the contents of the relevant code of practice (UUK or ANUK/Unipol) and partnership arrangements should only be undertaken with providers who are members of the ANUK/Unipol National Code.
10. The Union and University should consider the role it plays in improving standards in the broader private rented sector by implementing, managing and publicising local accreditation schemes.

Sustainability

11. Students should have access to the information contained in the Energy Performance Certificate for their accommodation.
12. The University should give each student in accommodation an estimate of the cost of the utilities they pay, where this is included in the rent to counteract the notion that energy is 'free'.
13. Initiatives to promote a reduction in energy usage should be implemented and the financial benefits of any behaviour change should be returned to the student as a rebate or be used to calculate a reduction in rent prices for the next cohort of students.

Consultation and student engagement

14. The Union and students more broadly should be actively involved in the rent setting process, as well as planning for future developments. Proper consultation and engagement will help to ensure that provision is appropriate and suitable for students.
15. Student accommodation satisfaction surveys should be undertaken regularly: each year if possible and not less than every two years. Ideally, these should be carried out towards the end of the academic year to ensure a good lead-in time for follow-on actions to be taken. The results should be made publicly available in summary form along the lines of a 'you said...we did' format and should feed into meeting with the union.

16. An equality impact assessment should be carried out for Blackdale and other new developments of accommodation to ensure adequate provision for all students, particularly those who have a disability and those with caring responsibilities.

DISABLED STUDENTS ALLOWANCE

The government has announced that it plans to make changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance in England, restricting those who receive non-medical support, such as laptops and note taking. With research showing that 59% of disabled respondents are worried about meeting basic living expenses, proposed cuts would greatly disadvantage disabled students in terms of their access to education, achievement and retention.

Mobilising students across Norfolk, we hope to lobby our MPs to vote and speak against the proposed cuts.

Our demands of MPs:

- To write to Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills
- To request a Westminster Hall debate on the proposed cuts
- To ask a parliamentary question to the Vince Cable as to the number of people in their constituency who are liable for DSA and the number of students who will be affected by the cuts

The campaign:

- Share the national government petition online wherever possible:
<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/63748>
- Action postcards/ petition for "Norfolk Students Against the DSA Cuts" or a name similar. This will target Norfolk MPs. *We will make this an online petition that directly sends letters to MPs, once people sign.*
- Shot video with students and staff describing the proposals, and also the impact that DSA cuts will have on disabled students. This will be targeted at MPs, but also to try to mobilise students elsewhere
- Thunderclap for the 6th June - the NUS' #Don'tCutMeOut lobby day (*Done*)
- Public Meeting with Chloe Smith and Simon Wright (some time in early June)

Actions:

- To ask the following if they will join the campaign, attend the public meeting, feature in the video etc:
 - o Dean of Students (Nerea/ Max / Rosie /Bintu) *Done - Annie Grant is not interested in helping on a grassroots level. We are waiting to hear back from Jane Absen, head of Disabilities in DOS*
 - o Mind (Bintu / Dan / Max)
 - o Chronic (Max, Dan) *Done - really positive support*
 - o Norwich City College students and Wallflower Project (Curtis)
 - o Local Sixthforms, FE Colleges (Curtis)
 - o Senior Management at UEA (Rosie / Bintu) *Mentioned in SU-Forum*
 - o Equal Opportunities Group Union (Bintu)
 - o Local Councilors, MPs (all)
 - o EDP, local media (Rosie)
 - o Hannah Paterson - Disabilities Officer at NUS (Bintu)
- Write a script for the opening content of the video (Rosie) *Done*
- Build some visual campaign materials for facebook event/ flyers (Rosie) Partially *Done - facebook cover, and logo*
- Ask Dean of Students to send out a campaign email to all students that might be affected (Max)
- Create action cards/ petition (Rosie)
- Invite Chloe Smith and Simon Wright - ask for available dates and decide on venue (Rosie) *Chloe has agreed to attend a round-table discussion at the NUS "We Are The Change: Generation Now" Conference in Norwich City Centre. There are some concerns that this will not bring in enough people from UEA, and that it is confusing the messages and events. Simon Wright has yet to reply.*
- Create Thunderclap (Curtis) *Done*

- Tom from NUA, has an update too: *I had the chance to speak to Clive Lewis PPC, Jessica Assato PPC, Richard Howitt MEP and Chuka Umunna MP yesterday when they visited NUA, with the main focus of getting the message across about DSA. They were all very surprised to hear that around 21% of our students are in receipt of DSA. Jessica and Chuka showed a clear distaste for the cuts and said they would share any petitions etc via social media. I'll send them a link to the one you sent me Rosie. I'm sure they would be happy to support our further actions if we were to ask, it's always good to get some big names behind you. As the Labour Shadow Business Minister, Chuka Umunna said he would raise further questions regarding cuts to DSA in parliament.*

*Further to this there have been some recent developments in relation to the NUS and DSA:

“Following the announcement from BIS re changes to the DSA the NADP Board has been working extensively with colleagues and stakeholders to ascertain the way forward. This has been undertaken with a view to ensuring that students’ interests are protected and we as an organisation are best positioned to support members. We have sought legal advice and as a consequence have worked with UUK and NUS who have co-signed a solicitor’s letter which was forwarded this week to BIS. This letter seeks to clarify the status of the changes and in conjunction with an FOI already undertaken we will be able to make an informed decision on the way forward. The Board is meeting tomorrow to discuss next steps and we will keep the membership updated as we progress. We have liaised with Heads of Disability Services to ensure that the Board is fully informed re concerns/issues etc but we welcome all views as we move forward.”

Next meeting, Wednesday 4pm, Bill Wilson Room, Union House: We will be filming the video, so please have think about something you might like to say on camera, if you’re interested in featuring.