

# UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD STUDENTS' UNION Minutes

**Meeting title:** Student Senate

**Location:** Peel Building, 107

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016

**Time:** 2pm

**Present:** Marina Hristova, Ade Abegunde (part), Ahmed Rafiq, Zamzam Ibrahim, Connor Keightley (Chair), Adeyinka Adebayo(part), Claire Carey, Bethan Sykes, Tanmay Barhale, Tom Roberts; Nikita Cranston

**In attendance:** Luke Newton (Clerk), Jessica Goldstone

**Apologies:** Sharma Shafiq, Mate Nagy, Nikita Cranston

**Absent:** Vacant positions: Languages and PGR rep, Dan Howarth, Ben Deacon, Mohammad Khan, Lorna Haidak

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1. Minutes of meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016 were approved
2. Ahmed presented the policy proposal for a review of the unions democratic processes and outlined the proposed new powers.

Passed unanimously

3. Policy proposals

- a. **Elections eligibility**

Claire presented the paper and answered questions on who would determine eligibility for elections. It was clarified that this would ultimately be down to the Returning Officer.

For: 3          Against: 1          Abstain: 5

Policy passed

- b. **Parking Policy**

Claire presented the parking policy proposal. Tanmay clarified that this was important as there would be no parking at the Adelphi building next year

For: 5          Against: 0          Abstain: 6

Policy passed

- c. **Guarantor Scheme**

Tanmay presented the proposal and clarified that international students would be prioritised in this scheme

Passed unanimously

4. Student Ideas

- a. More Bursaries- Passed (For 6, against 2, abstain 3)
- b. The Union should campaign to remain in the EU- Passed (For 9, against 1, abstain 1)
- c. Sensitivity training for University staff- Passed (For 6, against 0, abstain 4)
- d. Bigger and cheaper food shop in Media City Campus- Passed (For 4, against 1, abstain 5)

- e. Improve Newton Annex Prayer Facility- Passed (Unanimous)
- f. Fair Allocation of practice weeks during school holidays- Failed (For 0, abstain 11, against 0)
- g. HIVAIDS PAHTI FOUNDATION prevention of Aids HIV transmission In Institutions Of Higher Learning- Failed (For 1, against 3, abstain 7)
- h. Anonymous counselling- Failed (For 0, against 9, abstain 3)
- i. Latin Lessons- Failed (For 0, against 8, abstain 3)
- j. Taxi Stop near the library- Failed (For 0, against 11, abstain 3)
- k. Keep reserved books safe- Passed (For 6, against 0, abstain 5)

5. Nus update- Reports from National Conference attendees were noted

6.

Sabbatical Officer Reports:

Written reports were received from Marina Hristova, Ahmed Rafiq, Ade Abegunde, Tanmay Barhale and Zamzam Ibrahim

There were no accountability questions put to the sabbatical officers by Student Senate

Next meeting 16/17 academic year

## Policy passed Appendix

### **2) Democratic Review proposals**

#### **Senate Notes:**

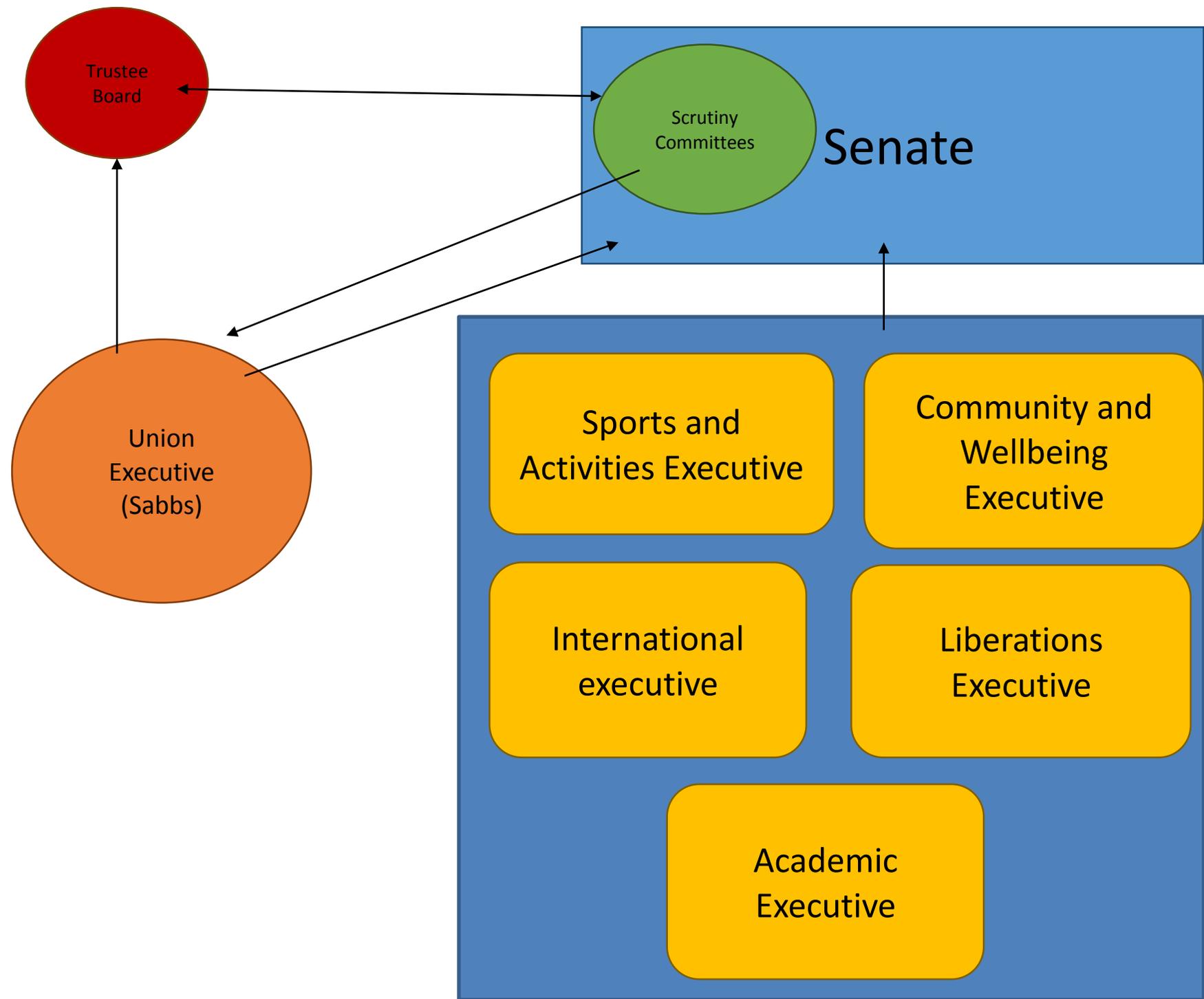
- 1) Student Council has the authority to set the policy of the Union and refer policy to referenda
- 2) The operating name for Student Council is currently Student Senate (Senate)
- 3) Senate has no control over any of the Unions finances
- 4) The Trustee Board has the authority to delegate power to other committees

#### **Senate Believes:**

- 1) Senate is the supreme democratic body of the union, subject to any referenda decisions.
- 2) A strong democratic body is vital in ensuring the Sabbatical Officer are held accountable and the Union acts in the interests of students
- 3) Senate currently has few powers and the powers it does have are seldom used.
- 4) The Trustee Board have delegated little of their power to other committees
- 5) The Trustee Board should regularly report to the student body via Senate
- 6) The Trustee Board should remain an impartial non-political body.
- 7) Activity groups, sports groups and other groups of the Union (e.g. Denizen Halls reps) are underrepresented in Union decision making processes and many decision making processes are currently unwritten and not controlled by students
- 8) A restructure of how Senate and democratic processes function is required to ensure the Union is representing all students. This restructure should be carried out using the following principles:
  - a) Decisions that affect students should, as far as possible, be taken by students that are affected by them
  - b) Elected Officials and representatives must be held to account in accessible and transparent ways
  - c) Greater powers should be given to students to influence the functioning of their Union, this must include budgetary control.
  - d) Democratic committees and representatives should, as far as possible, represent the full range of students at Salford.

#### **Senate Resolves:**

- 1) To reaffirm that Senate is the supreme democratic decision making and policy creating body of the Union.
- 2) To request that the trustees of the union, as far as is in their power to do so, formally devolve authority for the creation, oversight and budget of student groups and representatives to Senate. This would include Sports groups, activity groups, student representatives, halls representatives and other student representatives and groups. This would not affect the trustee's oversight responsibilities for the Unions finances.
- 3) To regularly report back to the Trustee Board on the distribution of funds and running of activity groups and representatives referred to in resolves 2.
- 4) To create new executive committees which will be responsible for the oversight, student leadership, budget and policy for a specific area. These will report regularly to Senate and the committee's membership should be made up of representatives from those areas.
- 5) To create new accessible ways to scrutinise Sabbatical Officers
- 6) To request the trustees amend as necessary the Bye-laws of the Union and make any further changes to implement these changes.
- 7) To feedback on the draft structure proposed below:



## **1) Elections eligibility**

This policy suggestion comes from the feedback received during and after the student elections from a number of students. It is thought that the process has become a popularity contest and is not ensuring that the right people are representation students within each school. There were also allegations made over being coerced to vote for particular candidates.

Disclaimer\* these are not just my personal thoughts, I have, however, listened to students and agreed to submit this proposal.

### **The Union Believes**

1. The current election process for sabbatical officers allows any student to be nominated for any school regardless of their suitability to the role.
2. In the interest of fairness, students can vote for sabbatical officers in other schools, not just the one they attend, yet, this may not be fair representation of the students within a particular school.

### **The Union Resolves**

1. Any student who wishes to stand for elections must be from the school they wish to represent OR be able to demonstrate, at the nomination stage, their suitability and provide evidence of their capability to represent those students.

## **2) Parking policy**

This policy is being submitted on behalf of the many, many, students who have complained about the lack of parking during my three years as a student at the University of Salford. It is a suggestion, for an initial trial period, that may offer a resolution for some. I acknowledge that this policy would stop some students parking, however, by only allowing parking permits for those who can demonstrate their 'need' will hopefully encourage everyone to consider alternative ways of travel.

### **The Union Believes**

1. Car parking on campus is an on-going contentious issue.
2. There are currently 1202 spaces available for students, monthly and casual parking, across all campuses and 10 disabled bays on the same car parks which is not enough for the number of students.
3. Other Universities, most notable Edge Hill and UCLAN, have adopted an eligibility scheme to apply for a parking permit.

4. The University of Salford should consider that some students NEED a space and do not have other alternatives available to them for various reasons and should not be disadvantaged or have to miss lectures due to lack of car parking spaces.

### **The Union Resolves**

Subject to a trial period.

1. All students who wish to park have to display a parking permit.
2. To introduce an eligibility criterion, that requires proof, to obtain a parking permit. (This list does not have to be exhaustive).
  - Blue Badge holder
  - Have child care commitments for primary aged children or a disabled child
  - Have other caring commitments
  - Short term mobility need or medical condition as certified by a Doctor
  - Course requirements, e.g. placements for health courses
3. Monitor the issuing and use of the parking permits to ensure they are not being abused and that students are using the most appropriate, and the closest, car park to access their lectures.
4. To encourage students to think about whether they need to use their car and to consider using public transport or car sharing.
5. Consider allowing students to park on the Frederick Rd Campus which is currently used as a staff only car park and is not always to full capacity.

### **3) Guarantor Scheme**

#### **Union Notes:**

1. Most landlords, and some private accommodation providers, that rent properties to students require a third person to act as a 'guarantor' before they sign a tenancy agreement. A guarantor is a third party, for example a family member, who agrees to pay the rent if for any reason the tenant cannot.
2. In some cases a guarantor is also liable for other costs that might be incurred, for example any damage to the property that happened whilst the tenant was living there.
3. Agreeing to be a guarantor is binding legal commitment, and landlords can take legal action against guarantor if the rent, or other costs, are not paid.
4. Trying to find someone to act as a guarantor presents problems for students for a range of reasons. Students who are care leavers, or estranged from their parents may not have relationships with their families which would enable them to ask them to act as a guarantor for a rented property.
5. In order for an individual to act as a guarantor, they must have an income which is suitably high enough to afford to cover the rent payment. For students from low-income backgrounds or who have parents that are out of

work, or in low paid work, it can be a challenge to find a guarantor that the landlord will accept.

6. Most landlords require that a guarantor is based in the UK to make it easier for the landlord to pursue any unpaid rent using the UK legal system. For international students this poses a substantial challenge, as they may not be able to provide a guarantor that is resident in the UK for the full tenancy.
7. From NUS research, Homes Fit for Study we found that 66 per cent of international students were asked to provide a UK based guarantor when they were looking to rent privately, but 37 per cent were unable to do so. Over 90 per cent of these students were asked for rent up front to compensate for this, and between one and six months' worth of rent was generally requested – although six months' rent was the most common requirement.
8. In many cases this equates to between £2,000- £9,000 being paid to the landlord at the start of the tenancy, which unfortunately is not a viable option for some students. Upfront payments of rent make student renters vulnerable to unscrupulous landlords, as once the rent is paid the tenant will struggle to have their money reimbursed if they have to vacate the property for any reason, or the tenancy is ended.

[http://nusdigital.s3-eu-west1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/23316/94ad9ef9a3b8216ff034e8df63d9956b/Housing\\_How\\_To\\_-\\_University\\_Guarantors\\_Scheme.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJKEA56ZWKFU6MHNQ&Expires=1461691873&Signature=exFxF2Ny5Jjh2bK81snbJfd31HA%3D](http://nusdigital.s3-eu-west1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/23316/94ad9ef9a3b8216ff034e8df63d9956b/Housing_How_To_-_University_Guarantors_Scheme.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJKEA56ZWKFU6MHNQ&Expires=1461691873&Signature=exFxF2Ny5Jjh2bK81snbJfd31HA%3D)

### **The Union Believes:**

1. Requirement of providing a UK based guarantor places additional burden on international students. Most of the international students don't have a guarantor based in UK and are required to approach commercial guarantor schemes or live in unfriendly accommodations.
2. There are a number of private companies that offer to act as a guarantor for a fixed fee. Private guarantor companies require students to pay the fee up-front, and in many cases the charge is up to 95% of one month's rent, on average around £290. Additionally many of these schemes require a UK-based 'co-signer' before they will approve an application, and in the terms and conditions of these schemes it is apparent that that the 'co-signer' is liable to repay any debt owed to the company as a result of non-payment of rent. These schemes are expensive, and usually unsuitable for international students who cannot find a UK 'co-signer' to endorse their application.
3. In response to the challenges faced by students who are unable to secure a guarantor some universities have introduced their own rent guarantor policies-

where the institution will act as a guarantor for their students looking to rent a property in both University accommodations and the private sector.

4. In any case where the student renter defaults on their rent payment to the landlord, the university will make the payment and chase the debt owed to them by the student separately. It is important to bear in mind that each institution is different, and any policy that is introduced will have to fit in with the culture and values of each organisation. There are successful implementations of these guarantor schemes from 1. University College London 2. SOAS 3. University of Edinburgh 4. University of York 5. London School of Economics 6. Queen Mary University of London

### **The Union Resolves:**

1. To convince our university to run a guarantor scheme in a pilot project, to test out how the scheme could work with a small number of students. Pilot schemes are useful for collect lessons about how to run a project on a wider scale and can help to demonstrate the benefits of the scheme in a low-risk environment.
2. A Sabbatical officer or officer team leading on the project could discuss with University to define which students are eligible for the scheme. For example some institutions have reserved the scheme for international students only, some only with dependent children, and some schemes are not open to students in their foundation year of studying at the university.
3. Most universities that operate guarantor schemes charge a small administration fee of £30-£50 per student. This fee can be negotiated by the officer team and University keeping as minimum as possible.
4. Officer / team will discuss with University to define which properties are eligible for the scheme. In order to minimise exposure to fraud, as well as rogue landlords, it is advisable to create (and make available to students) a register of properties that would qualify for the guarantor scheme.
5. Officer / team will discuss with University to define the rent level the scheme will cover. It would be sensible to cap the amount of rent, the scheme could cover to ensure that it is only being used for legitimate housing requests, however this should be reviewed according to any changes in accommodation prices to ensure that the level of cover provided to student renters is reasonable.
6. A robust verification procedure should be in place. It is advisable to make a copy of the tenancy agreement and verify the terms and conditions for any student accessing the scheme. Some institutions also ask for financial details from students, such as a proof of income or bank statement, to check that the student

is able to afford the rent payments, and that the student has set up an automatic payment (such as a Direct Debit or standing order) to the landlord to avoid late payment. At the University of York, applicants have to have their tenancy approved from University before they can sign up, and are also required to provide bank statements and proof of income before they are allowed to join the scheme

7. To establish a clear policy and procedure to chase the debt owed for non-payment of rent. This could include verifying the students' home address and household details. Queen Mary University London includes a declaration in the application form to join the scheme that lays out the steps that will be taken to recover any debt owed to the university which students are required to sign.

#### **4) More bursaries**

As you are all aware of, we students struggle with money so therefore I think there should be more bursaries to help us out.

#### **5) The Union should campaign to remain in the EU**

UK Prime Minister David Cameron has announced a referendum on whether Britain should remain in the European Union to be held on Thursday 23 June. Since exiting Europe will affect thousands of our students, our Students Union like NUS and other Unions should campaign for the UK to stay in Europe?

#### **6) Sensitivity training for University staff**

Entering my last year of bachelor's degree it shocked me, just how much university workers think it's okay to pressure students into getting the best marks. The method used for incentivising students is fear mongering as well, which I think is the wrong way to do it. These are just a few sentences that my course has been told in our last half a year at University:

"If you get anything besides a first you have officially wasted your time here", "at least if you don't go to university, you can tell your employer that you have potential, the moment you get a 2:1 or a 2:2 all you can show is that you're average or below average at best" and "fear is the best driven force of humanity".

I do believe that there's a better way to incentivise progress and give negative feedback. I do not feel like students should be put in a mind-set that not getting a first would ruin their lives.

Proposed solutions:

There are more expensive and more intrusive ways of solving this, but I do believe that releasing simple guidelines on "how to give negative feedback" and "how to incentivise progress without resorting to fearmongering" could go a long way. I do not believe that any lecturers that say such things mean harm. I do believe that they mean good. However it would prove beneficial if there was at least some sort of understanding of how much damage such sentences can do.

Example of more proper sentence would be something like "a first would open more doors for you, meaning it would be best if you aimed for a first".

### **7) Bigger and cheaper Food shop in Media City campus**

We need a bigger and cheaper food shop in the media city campus because:  
There is hardly any hot foods available  
The prices are outrageous  
We deserve better!

### **8) Improve Newton Annex Prayer Facility**

There is not enough space to safely facilitate the required prayer/congregation for Muslims on Friday, nor is the entrance/exit adequate enough to allow people to enter and exit safely during peak times. This is a health and safety issue, as during a fire a stampede and people becoming trapped inside is highly probable.

During the new building works around the Newton Annex, people are also at risk of becoming struck by construction vehicles. Recently there was an incident where someone came very close to getting ran over by a lorry. Many things have gone wrong for this incident to occur but the inadequate prayer facility is definitely a contributing factor. Fortunately the person was not struck as bystanders grabbed them away from danger.

I expect the university to be liable for this issue.

### **9) Keep reserved books safe**

I recently reserved a book online and arrived to collect it from the reserved book shelf at Clifford Whitworth library to find it was not there. This was slightly annoying as I had come to Uni especially to collect the book. The library staff were really helpful, however it does seem there's a bit of a problem with reserved books going walkabout. My big idea is simply to suggest that the books could be kept securely so that students can rely on their reserved book being there when they need it.