Minutes of Union Senate - March 2020

* Welcome and apologies

The Chair of Union Senate, Adrian Li, welcomed all those present and confirmed that with five sabbatical officers and seven senators present it was a quorate meeting and would continue. Apologies had been received in advance for all those missing on the day.

* Minutes of the previous meeting

After confirming that the minutes had been received and understood, they were then approved unanimously without amendments.

* Sabbatical reports and questions

Before commencing the questions, Adrian confirmed that in the interest of saving time in the meeting the Sabbatical Officers would not be providing a round-up of their reports and that they would be taken as read. Due to the quick organisation of this Union Senate meeting, there was not time to put in a pre-brief or to receive questions in advance and so Adrian confirmed to the audience and to the media teams that we would allow questions to be taken away to be researched and added to the minutes at a later stage. This should not reflect a lack of knowledge on the part of the Sabbatical Officer who usually have time to bring research to the meeting.

Adrian also confirmed that the Sabbatical Report for Olivia Reed, VP Sport was not received on time. This is the second Sabbatical Report out of three for the year as a whole that has been received late and so Adrian confirmed that if the next is also late he will put forward a motion for disciplinary action. In the meantime, more time would be given to Olivia so that a round-up could be received in the meeting and so we would start with Emily Harrison, Union President first.

Emily Harrison - Union President

Q: Can we have an update on the University’s 10 year plan?

A: As we now have a new VC, we can expect to see the plan move forward. As part of this Sport is likely to be taken over by the University in the near future, but this is pending staffing being arranged. The new VC is keen to have an influence over the plan, and specifically they have engaged architects to discuss the library and heart of campus building.

Q: Can you explain more about the Laundry facilities in Halls?

A: We met with Circuit Laundry, who look after these facilities. Currently, we have the lowest laundry charges on the South Coast which means we don’t have much argument to ask for it to be lowered. There is a cost to running the service but we are talking to Residences to see if this can be further subsidized for students, but the subsidy for the bus pass will likely take priority as there are fewer 18 year olds going into Halls based on demographics.

Jo Lisney - VP Education and Democracy

Q:  Can we have an updated on the mandatory dissertation printing conversations?

A: These are confidential meetings unfortunately, but the University are still discussing it.

Q: How will YMC as a physical forum work?

A: There will still be an online platform that will work in the same way as before, but we are looking to change the Making Change Summit format to encourage discussion and make feedback opportunities more accessible.

Q: Will the MCS still be part of the AGM and if so, what will be changing?

A: Yes, it will be at the AGM still. However, we plan to take the meeting to sites to gather feedback where students are. We will then take that feedback on board to be explored through the rest of the year.

Q: Will there be some consideration to the size of the room when asking other students to attend?

A: The Boardroom is the biggest meeting room we have but we will talk to the University about using one of their larger rooms, depending on lecture times.

Fiona Sunderland – VP Activities

Q: Can you explain why the locks have been changed from keys to codes and how this affects security?

A: We had trouble with keys being lost, copied or not returned because reception isn’t always manned. The codes are only given out to those people who require them or work at reception. They are also updated every term so that those who stop having access via membership can’t remember and still gain access.

Q: Keys to the different cupboards – who has access to them and what is happening with the system for signing them out?

A: Working with the new Business Services team who look after reception to get an updated list of keys created and to ensure that all staff at reception are properly trained on signing in and out keys.

Q: With the online training, why was it not presented to all roles on committees and why is it mandatory?

A: Our focus was ensuring that key roles on committees had access to the training first so that they could provide advice to the rest of the committee. The roles chosen are the ones that all committees should have, eg President, Treasurer and Secretary. The expectations on clubs and societies behaviour are the same as they always have been but we are now ensuring that training has been provided, we are looking to streamline this in the future.

Q: Can we have an update on your work into using professional venues?

A: This is likely to look different in the future with the Nuffield coming back to the University. Also, reaching out to the Turner Sims so that more than only PA students get to use this space.

Q: Will the Clarkson Room at the Nuffield be closed in April?

A: Fiona will find out.

Q: The networking about using Turner Sims was useful but the barriers to using it are actually the cost, what can be done?

A: Can look into this, with the Nuffield the external venue hires pay for the student use but not sure this is the same at Turner Sims.

Q: What will happen to the Nuffield, will it be closing?

A: The lease is ending and so the commercial theatre is leaving but the building won’t necessarily close. It may be shut for some building work but it will at least be open during the summer for graduations.

Laura Barr – VP Welfare

Q: The donations in the bookcase don’t seem to be organised, how is this going and is it being used?

A: It is being used by students, we are definitely seeing products being taken. We get a lot of it donated for free and I’m looking at the best way to hand this over to the next VP Welfare so that it continues to grow.

Q: We have had feedback that the WIDE training wasn’t very effective, will it be updated?

A: We held a focus group and sent out a survey but we didn’t get many responses. We will be updating it as the feedback we have received indicated that it was sport focused enough.

Q: The money that will come from Santander, what will this look like.

A: We’re still looking into what students need, I’m working with our Disabilities Officer on this. It won’t go towards campaigns but more practical support or changes.

Q: In terms of Expect Respect, what can SUSU actually do when this is breached?

A: SUSU as disciplinary processes that it can take students or clubs and societies through if they are in breach of the Expect Respect policy. These do have a range of sanctions that can be implemented after investigation. If we aren’t able to investigate or we deem it to be serious enough it can be referred to the University to go through their complaints procedure.

Q: What is the difference between the University and SUSU’s disciplinary processes?

A: The University is able to impose harsher sanctions against individuals that can have an effect on their University life. Our complaints and disciplinary procedures are mainly linked to a students behaviours as part of a SUSU activity, such as through clubs and societies. If it is serious enough, we hold a Disciplinary Hearing which is lead by an elected Disciplinary Chair and a random jury of elected officers all from the student body.

Q: With regards to the Mayflower FC incident, didn’t SUSU raise their own investigation?

A: Emily Harrison stepped in to help answer this question and explained it would be bad practice for SUSU to raise and investigation of this nature and if the University investigates, SUSU has a position in calling them out if they don’t take proper action. If SUSU first investigated, they would not be able to later criticise the University. We are calling for an investigation into the University’s process.

Q: The LGBT+ society was not consulted about the campaign for LGBT month, the wording around this need to be clearer and more specific on who was consulted.

A: This month of campaigns is not an LGBT+ Society event and so we consulted with our elected LGBT+ Officer as it is part of their role to support SUSU campaigns.

Q: What will happen to the Erasmus scheme after Brexit?

A: The University is talking to European Universities about how they can continue to work together but no decisions have been made yet.

Q: Can you update us on issues around Special Considerations Comms?

A: I’m sitting on various boards trying to ensure they’re updated their processes and  bridging gap that they don’t currently know are there. The Special Considerations Comms need radical change and this has been raised at working groups but the University moves slowly and I can’t promise immediate change.

Olivia Reed – VP Sport

Q: Can we have more clarity on split payments for sport and wellbeing?

A: There are several methods being explored, including termly payments versus monthly payments. We’re working with the University and the payment system as clubs main expenses come at the beginning of the year when kit and equipment I bought, we are therefore changing our grant allocation from SUSU to help with club finances, but the money for sport and wellbeing is different.

Q: Can you tell us more about the grant allocations and the intra-mural funding?

A: Grant allocations take place in the summer as normal but intra-mural clubs are not in place during the summer so they will be done differently, we will focus more on equipment and kit.

Q: What changes can be expected from sport being moved to the University and how will we hold them accountable?

A: We are currently lobbying ourselves for changes when there is a problem as we are looking after sport and it’s accountability together. If it moves to the University we will have an independent position to lobby from. We are still in discussion about how it will look but we should be able to create a more representative system after it has moved.

Q: There isn’t anything about intra-mural on the website?

A: We have very recently updated this, I will also be looking at given intra-mural clubs access to groups hub pages.

Q: There have been some issues with free sport session, how will this change next year?

A: They were run by Sport and wellbeing staff this year who didn’t ask what student wanted before-hand. We will be asking for student feedback before next year so that student will have a say in what they want to see offered. I’ll also be ensuring that we have a plan ahead of handover to the next VP Sport.

Q: Can we have more publicity for Eramus students on sports, especially for those who come part way through the year and miss the freshers sessions?

A: Yes, we’ll look into this.

* Student Officer Reports

Received by senate without questions.

* Discussion 1 - Clothing for elected officers and student volunteers

This came from a You Make Change submission that questioned whether it was a waste of money and resourced to provide personalised hoodies and clothing to volunteers each year.

Q: What is the base level cost of the hoodies?

A: We’re not sure as different departments handle ordering for their own volunteers and not all roles are filled yet. However, it is cheaper this year due to some changes in the process.

There was some discussion around having non-personalised hoodies that are returned, however most elected officers where their hoodies a lot and they suffer a lot of wear by the end of the year. Also discussed course reps have badges instead of t-shirts.

A comment was made that it helps to engage and encourage conversation with students as they see the clothing and come up to talk to you. It helps that they are personalised as they already know your name when they come to ask a question.

**Vote:** Should we keep the SUSU clothing for volunteers?

11 – for

0 – against

0 – abstain

**Action:** Jo is to take this away and do some research into the costs of hoodies and t-shirts and ways this can be made more sustainable and cost effective.

* Discussion 2 - All Student Vote about the UCU Strike Action

Q: There were three options on the vote but a requirement of 50% mandate on the outcome. This isn’t in the rules for normal All Student Votes and risked a three-way tie?

A: Emily Harrison, Union President answered this by saying that this was explained in more detail in the blog on the results. We needed a strong mandate from the Student body on what we should do because of the disruption strike action causes to education. The 50% mandate was an attempt to prevent a three-way tie but this is what we had in the end so we calculated the collective percentage instead. In the future we won’t do that again and will only have two questions instead.

Q: There has been some debate as to whether another vote was needed.

A: The vote at the AGM didn’t confirm our stance or the action we should take.

Q: Why was there such a short time given to students to take part in the vote?

A: This was due to UCU and their announcement being very short notice, we didn’t have long to put together the vote screen and communicate it to all students before the strike started.

Q: Should it have been an All Student Vote as previous, similar decisions have come to senate?

A: We felt like it was too big a decision for Senate to take on it’s own and that all students needed to have a say as they will be effected in unique ways by the strike action.

Q: Has SUSU spoken to the University?

A: We have signed an open letter and shared the response in our blog post.

* Discussion 3 - Apathy in student engagement

Emily started the discussion by talking about some of the changes in the staff team that should lead to more efficient meetings taking place. This will allow more time to go towards building relationships with elected officers. We also have a new Mar/comms manager who is on board for promoting our events and meetings more widely on our social media and website.

We are reviewing the roles of student officers and asking that they attend more meetings, we will in turn be ensuring they have more advanced invitations to the meetings that take place. It was acknowledged that room size is a big factor in this.

There was a discussion about the domino effect between student officers being more engaged and therefore talking to students about what is happening in SUSU. Jo Lisney confirmed that she has sent emails to all her officers about events and news, and has confirmed that these are being received.

It was also expressed the SUSU can’t expect student who are not engaged for the majority of the time to then attend meetings sporadically. They are disconnected from how SUSU runs and don’t see the merit in attending. We need to advertise to them from the very beginning what the impact of turning up actually is. This should come as part of the induction talks. Before we do this, we need to know why we want students to attend and what the perceived value is for them and for us. SUSU doesn’t effect their degree or their study, it is outside of that and if a student doesn’t understand it or know their place in it they won’t spare the time from their schedule.

We should also be learning from some areas where engagement is already high, such as with course reps.

We should also be making more of our successes, especially those that have had direct student involvement. Promoting these through our own channels in crucial for students seeing that change takes place through SUSU. It would also help to bring back the fun, party atmosphere so that students feel willing to engage. If it is a break from studying, with freebies and activities they are more likely to feel it is worth the time.

* Discussion 4 - Increased Senator insight into everyday running of SUSU

There was already some discussion around this during the Senator Training at the beginning of the year but wanted to confirm the action going forward.

Senate agreed on more involvement in everyday running of SUSU between meeting an for this to be put in place before the third Senate of the year.

* AOB

Q: There were a number of women’s events this week but only one sabb attended. Why weren’t more sabbs from an all female team attending events?

A: Emily Harrison, Union President answered this as the line manager of the sabb team. She explained that the job is supposed to be 9-5 with some flexibility. However, there are events happening all the time throughout the year and sabbs need to have a work live balance. If they come to evening events, this means taking time out of the day to have a break and so they aren’t there for meetings or to answer questions. We try to come to as much as possible but it isn’t always something we can do.