

MINUTES OF MEETING



Council / Senate / Students Union committee meeting

Tuesday 02 November 2021 at 14:15

Council Chamber and remotely via MS Teams

Present:

Professor Ian White, Vice Chancellor and President (Chair)
Dr Marion Harney, Member of Council appointed by Council
Tim Hollingsworth, Member of Council appointed by Council
Muhammad Irfan, Student Representative
Kate Robinson, Member of Senate elected by Senate
Dr John Troyer, Member of Senate elected by Senate
Annie Willingham, Students' Union (SU President)
Jacob Withington, SU Education Officer
Hon Yui Wong, Student Representative

In attendance:

Meg Crossman, SU Community Officer
Ben Goose, Project Manager (Student Experience)
Dr Nicky Kemp, Director of Policy, Planning and Compliance for minute no.
Jane Loveys, Director of Accommodation & Hospitality Services
Zoë Paumelle, SU Activities Officer
Anthony Payne, Director of Student Services
Rachel Sheer, Director of Academic Registry
Siddharth Singh, SU Postgraduate Officer
Charlie Slack, Head of Student Voice and Engagement
Elizabeth Stacey, SU Sport Officer
Professor Cassie Wilson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (Student Experience)

Secretariat

Dr Caroline Harris, Secretary
Graham Brooks, taking notes

Apologies

Professor Joe Devine, Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)
Nicky Passmore, SU Chief Executive

Introductory Items

1269 – Welcome and Quorum

The Chair welcomed new members and attendees and made a formal note of attendance to ensure that quorum was maintained throughout the meeting.

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1270 – Declarations of Interest

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest to declare.

1271 – Membership and Terms of Reference – Paper CSSU21/22-001

The membership and terms of reference of the Committee were noted.

1272 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Paper CSSU21/22-002

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2021 were approved.

1273 – Actions and Matters Arising

CSSU noted the following:

1. Tuition Fee Refunds (minute 1263(1))

VP (Student Experience) to work with The SU to convene a meeting between concerned students and the senior management of the University. *A meeting between The SU, students, Director of Finance and PVC (Teaching & Learning) was held. The Director of Finance gave an overview of the finances, and both then responded to questions. The meeting had achieved its aim. Complete*

2. Drugs Harm Reduction (minute 1263(2))

PVC (Student Experience) to work with The SU and Catherine Bailey to produce a project proposal with associated costs. *A further report would be provided under item 1275(1) as the creation of a drug harm reduction policy was one of The SU's top ten issues this year. Ongoing*

Part I

1274 – Update on the Return of Students at the Start of the Academic Year

The Director of Accommodation & Hospitality Services gave an update regarding the return of students at the start of the academic year. Arrangements had been made for the quarantine of international students who had arrived from red list countries. As part of the Campus Safe and Ready preparations, ventilation and occupancy considerations had informed the University's timetabling. Further work undertaken is provided in more detail in Appendix 1.

The Chair expressed his thanks for the efforts made in the face of huge logistical challenges. The SU President echoed those sentiments and recognised the efforts that had been made to ensure that the student experience was as good as could possibly be expected in the circumstances. The SU President requested that a summary of the preparations and work undertaken be shared, such that it could be highlighted to the students.

The Chair extended his thanks to The SU for the huge amount of work that had gone into making Welcome Week a success. The SU President stated that Dartmouth Avenue was working well as a community space for student sport teams and societies but that the lounge area was less well used during the day, so they intended to advertise it more widely.

Action: Director of Accommodation & Hospitality Services to share a summary of Campus Safe and Ready preparations – attached as appendix 1.

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1275 – Students' Union Business – Papers CSSU21/22 – 003 to 005

1. The SU Bath's Top Ten 2021-22 Overview

This was the twelfth year that The SU had created a 'Top Ten' list of priority issues, as a mechanism that demonstrated key issues and concerns amongst students. The SU officers briefly summarised each of the top ten issues this year.

The PVC (Student Experience) noted that a member from the University Executive Board (UEB) had been allocated to lead on each of the Top Ten items. Meetings would take place between the UEB lead and The SU to agree brief action plans that would be used to monitor progress and would be shared with Council.

A Member of Council commented that the Top Ten list was a very effective mechanism for raising awareness of The SU's key issues. In particular, he was interested to further his understanding of the mental health situation amongst students. It was noted that The SU were guided by the Mental Health Charter and had launched a survey which would inform their approach further. The Director of Student Services emphasised that it was important to enable challenging conversations and to assist people in connecting to the available services. Noting that different people accessed support in different ways, Student Services were trying to introduce a range of options, including *Be Well, Talk Now*.

2. Top Ten Item: Sulis Club Refurbishment

The SU gave a presentation on their call to invest in the refurbishment of the Sulis Club. The presentation highlighted the following points:

- It was used for sports fixtures on a weekly basis
- Facilities were not of the same standard as those in the Sports Training Village
- Student feedback on the state of the club had been disappointing
- Opposition teams had been known to request a relocation of their fixtures
- Approximately 2,000 students were using the Sulis Club

The SU were calling for a refurbishment and enlargement of the changing and storage facilities. Such investment would enable a competitive atmosphere and would increase the capacity and range of use. The Department of Sports Development and Recreation were currently looking into costings.

A Member of Council enquired whether formal endorsement was required and what the next steps would be. The SU confirmed that they sought the support of the Committee. The PVC (Student Experience) advised that all of The SU's top ten would be considered and, ideally, they would all be achieved. Action plans, would, however, need to be realistic and pragmatic which might necessitate some compromise. Some items might be achievable quite quickly, whereas others might require a longer time frame.

The Chair felt that it was incredibly helpful for the Committee to understand The SU's priorities and thanked them for the work that had gone into the Top Ten list.

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3. The SU's 'Citizenshift' project and related new Voice mechanisms

The Committee were briefed on the introduction of four new or revised processes to deliver The SU's three strategic objectives:

- I. Creation of 'Standpoints' (a political stance of The SU on a specific topic).
- II. Creation of 'Summit' (a cross SU committee of student leaders and elected representatives who meet to discuss and agree SU standpoints, provide a steer for the work of SU officers and identify emerging issues).
- III. Revision of the 'Ideas to Action' portal (an online mechanism for students to submit ideas and opinions to the SU).
- IV. Redefining topical engagement events as 'Citizens Assemblies' (a meeting of students from across the University who provide input and insight on a single topic).

A question was raised as to whether the new or revised process would slow down the speed of decision making. The SU clarified that the processes had not been designed with speed in mind specifically; rather they had been designed to meet a need to capture student views in a longitudinal manner. Other avenues existed for decisions to be taken quickly, where necessary.

The PVC (Student Experience) enquired whether this was likely to result in more campaigns. The SU stated that it was unclear at this stage. When students came forward to request an SU campaign, there were criteria against which the request was considered. As a charity, the SU was forbidden from campaigning in certain areas, whilst there were others which they would choose not to campaign on as a matter of principle.

[1276 – Annual Report on Student Casework 2020-21 – Papers CSSU21/22 – 006 to 009](#)

1. Student Complaints

The Director of Policy, Planning and Compliance summarised the student complaints report. The new Student Casework Manager had provided consistency in complaint handling during 2020/21, which had been an interesting year given the impact of the pandemic. The recent ministerial encouragement for students to pursue complaints meant that an increase was expected in the coming year.

It was apparent that the interface between complaints procedures and those that related to dignity and respect would require attention. There was an emerging trend for an increase in complaints from doctoral students; work remained ongoing. It was hoped that processes could be streamlined.

Data from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) indicated that the University performed better than the median compared to other universities of a similar size, in terms of their student population. A new Department of Student Policy and Safeguarding was being set up and responsibility for handling Student Complaints would fall under this department.

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The nature of complaints within the 'other' category was queried. It was clarified that this included, amongst other things, how the University actually dealt with complaints and applied its own processes.

2. Student Discipline

The PVC (Student Experience) reported on Student Discipline processes for the 2020/21 academic year. It was felt that they had operated well under extreme pressure and a significant increase in cases which were largely COVID related. Cases were dealt with by a small team and thanks were extended to colleagues in Student Services and Security for their hard work. The efforts of the Security staff were commended in particular because, at times, they had been required to 'police' rather than support students, which had put them in a difficult position. It was hoped that, with fewer restrictions in place this year, that they would be able to focus on their role in supporting students.

The SU President recognised the valuable support that Security provided and thought that it should be highlighted to students. It was noted that, in regard to mental health first aid a number of Security staff had received relevant training.

A request was made for a breakdown of stage 2 cases by category. It was clarified that due to time and staffing constraints, it had not been possible to complete that analysis. It was agreed that such a breakdown would be provided next year, however. The Chair expressed disappointment that there had been an increase in the number of cases but recognised the exceptional circumstances.

Future Student Discipline cases would be dealt with by the new Department of Student Policy and Safeguarding.

3. Fitness to Practise

There had been zero cases for the prior four years but in 2020/21 there was one case, involving two persons.

Future Fitness to Practice cases would be dealt with by the new Department of Student Policy and Safeguarding.

4. Fitness to Study

Cases remained relatively low each year. The associated policy had been significantly revised for implementation in 2021/22. In particular, the interaction with other policies had been clarified and the supportive nature of the policy emphasised.

The potential for mental health issues to lead to future Fitness to Study cases was discussed. Prevention would be key - as outlined in The SU Top Ten list – and the Student Experience Development Fund would be important for getting resources on the ground.

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The Committee noted the four reports and referred them to Senate and Council for consideration.

1277 – Harassment Reporting Data 2020-21 – Paper CSSU21/22-010

The PVC (Student Experience) advised the Committee that in the future the University would collect data on any report made to any service, not just those received through the Report and Support tool. The intention was to capture a complete picture of the number of harassment cases being reported. The number of cases recorded was expected to increase as a result, and data would not be comparable with previous years. Data would be shared with Council to raise awareness.

The Committee noted the report.

1278 – Student Experience Development Fund – Paper CSSU21/22-011

The Student Experience Development Fund income primarily derived from fines imposed through the student disciplinary process. Funds were used for projects designed to enhance the student experience that could not be funded from other sources. This was the first report to the Committee. Processes had been formalised, including the process for allocating funds based on an assessment of applications against defined criteria. The SU President recognised that lots of positive results had arisen from the fund.

The Committee noted the report.

Part 2

1279 – Programme of Meetings for 2021/22

The Committee noted the programme of meetings.

- Thursday 2 December 2021 at 2.15pm
- Thursday 17 February 2022 at 2.15pm
- Tuesday 26 April 2022 at 2.15pm

1280 – Any Other Business

The SU President raised the issue of drink spiking, which had received much media attention recently. A campaign to boycott night time venues remained ongoing. SU representatives would be attending a meeting of 'Safe and Secure' with owners of local night-time venues, at which this issue would be high on the agenda; an open letter with 600 student signatures had been sent to them. It was noted that this was a national campaign and whilst there was not thought to be a particular problem in Bath, a number of cases had been reported recently in Bristol.

The PVC (Student Experience) confirmed that the issue would be considered at the next Harassment Working Group meeting.

The meeting finished at 4.05pm.

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Appendix 1

Summary of AHS preparations for 2021/22

Preparations prior to students arriving

- Specific accommodation to support our students requiring testing - free of charge
- Still have 46 beds in Polden Court to support continuing students who may need to quarantine. 9,800 queries – 489 acm. 2284 tests

Campus safe & ready

- Reviewed all teaching and student facing spaces to ensure safe levels of occupancy – taking into consideration method of ventilation
- Support was given to enable risk assessments to be completed to ensure all SU, Sports & ahs lead activities could be facilitated safely
- Dartmouth Avenue, Virgil Building floors 1-3 and The Edge were set up with appropriate furniture, cleaning regimes and protocols to enable activities to commence from beginning of term
- Air scrubbers and Co2 monitors have been purchased to ensure larger events can be facilitated safely
- Cleaning regimes in teaching, social and living areas have been reviewed to ensure areas are compliant with current guidance
- Signage has been updated around campus with key messages – face coverings, testing, vaccination
- Additional external spaces provided with benches to socialise introduced in accommodation and key footfall areas
- Hospitality outlets in 2 West open for students to use as additional space plus we have retained the marquee with heating on Chancellors' Green