

MINUTES OF SRC COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON THURSDAY 28TH MARCH 2024 AT 6.00 PM  
MCINTYRE BUILDING  
WILLIAMS ROOM/ZOOM

Present: As per sederunt

Apologies: G Connor, T Anderson, M Corbett, J Lismore, M Piermattei, C Michel, O Saleh, I Libelli-Vinco, F Wilson (GUU)

Attending: B Hay, J Small, P Swinton

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- **Welcome, Apologies and Sederunt**

As above.

- **Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

Minutes of previous meeting approved.

- **Council Reports**

**SRC President - H Pentleton Owens**

As discussed at the recent Welfare Forum, the SRC is currently restructuring one of the business cases for the Student Experience Strategy and is looking for more funding for SRC events focusing on welfare, equality, and inclusion. The hope is that funding will allow the SRC to maintain a high level of student engagement with celebratory days and events. An update on this work will be provided in due course.

H Pentleton-Owens said the SRC raised the significant delays surrounding the reviews of the Good Cause, Fitness to Study and Student Carer policies at the last Student Experience Committee meeting. At this meeting, David Duncan and Martyn Hendry agreed that these policy reviews would be prioritised, however, since the meeting M Hendry has said there are too many resourcing issues and, as such, this is likely an area of work to be carried out by the incoming Sabbatical team. Given the significant delays around this work, the current Sabbatical team are not satisfied with this outcome and will be discussing ways the issues can be addressed this year. An update on plans will be provided to Council in due course.

The Cost-of-Living Action Group has seen delays in its research due to the University's resistance to issuing the group's survey. The SRC is pushing for the survey to be sent out to students as soon as possible, with the hope it will be sent out w/c 8<sup>th</sup> April. The SRC is also advocating for the Cost-of-Living student intern's contract to be extended.

The SRC formerly set up a working group in tandem with the University to look at a university-focused approach to harm reduction. This project has now been expanded to focus on harm reduction in the wider community and is being funded from David Duncan's reserve budget. H Pentleton-Owens said this is a largely positive development, however, due

to the changing shape of the project, the SRC will work with D Duncan to ensure the original university-focused purpose of the project is not lost and that the SRC's voice on the project is heard.

### **VP Education – Ross Whip**

A Teams site is now in operation for Class Reps. All academic School and College reps have been added to their respective channels and work is being undertaken to add a PGT channel. R Whip said the site will be valuable in the next academic year for Class Rep interaction. Though not fully automated as originally intended, the system for adding new Class Reps to the Teams is straightforward. R Whip will speak to T Killean from The Advice Centre regarding incorporating the Teams site into Class Rep training. He said he will also brief incoming VP Education, H Busquier Cerdan, on the site and put together some information for incoming reps on how it works.

The 2024 Student Teaching Awards were a success with 80-90 attendees. Attendees also enjoyed a celebration after the ceremony. R Whip is currently drafting a formal written report of the event. He expressed his thanks to M Bah and O Saleh for organising prayer rooms and provisions for guests celebrating Ramadan. R Whip also expressed thanks to V Palomar Conesa and M Piermattei for stepping in at short notice to present awards.

The SRC has persuaded the University to reimburse students for travel costs arising from the change in format of Life Sciences exams. The University is also offering free University accommodation for affected students who require it. The University's original plans were to offer accommodation on a pro rata basis, however, the SRC convinced it to offer it for free where needed.

### **VP Student Activities – Mariama Bah**

M Bah expressed thanks to everyone who attended the VCS awards. She said the event was a success and that she is currently writing a report which will be circulated before the next Council meeting.

Planning for the SRC's Spring De-stress Campaign is underway. Council members with ideas for events should contact M Bah.

M Bah expressed her thanks to E Olaleye for organising the SRC's Home Students Day. The event took place on 15<sup>th</sup> March and was a success with well-attended events.

O Simon expressed her thanks to M Piermattei for taking part in the Periodic Subject Review for the School of Physics and Astronomy and for raising students' concerns.

H Pentleton-Owens thanked all Council members who attended PSRs and said positive feedback from staff has been received.

N Mary McLaughlin said she previously reported hearing that a 1<sup>st</sup> year student was told by University staff to contact an older student for support. She said this issue was raised and subsequently dealt with within the student's department.

P Moran Ruiz said Trans Day of Visibility will take place 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. He said he has tried to contact GULGBTQ+ regarding plans for the day but has not heard back.

H Pentleton-Owens said the Sabbatical Officers have also tried contacting the society and it has not been clear whether they plan to hold any events for Trans Day of Visibility this year. She acknowledged, however, that the society have just had their AGM which could explain the delay in response. H Pentleton-Owens said, as the event coincides with Easter Sunday, there would likely be not many students/staff on campus to attend a flag-raising event. As such, the SRC plan to issue a statement and some resources on the event instead. H Pentleton-Owens said the SRC may look at having a standardised approach to planning for day-celebration events in the future and could organise them without society assistance if required.

- **Planned SRC Campaigns**

H Pentleton-Owens said two campaigns are being prioritised by the Sabbatical Officers during their remaining time in office – the Cost of Learning Campaign and the Disabling the Narrative Campaign.

With regards to the Cost of Learning campaign, the SRC plans to lobby the University to introduce a standardised approach to mandatory placement travel costs. H Pentleton-Owens, R Whip and The SRC Advice Centre are undertaking a research project into how this is handled across different Schools. The Advice Centre have collated this information and helped formulate a list of recommendations. The idea of a standardised approach in this area has been raised with D Duncan and M Hendry and the heads of Colleges and they seem supportive. The campaign would also look at ensuring there is a level of transparency across the board regarding emotional learning hours, so that students are aware of staff expectations regarding how many hours they should dedicate to their studies. This would aim to help students experiencing time poverty.

R Whip said the idea for introducing a standardised approach to mandatory placement travel costs arose from academic representatives on Council who had concerns within their individual subjects. He said the campaign's goal would be to introduce a standardised approach to claiming expenses as well as change the University's stance on not funding travel expenses for students undertaking placements within Glasgow (they currently do not fund these expenses). He said the SRC will also advocate for a change to the expense-claiming system, so that students would be given money directly for travel in advance of undertaking placements and would submit receipts. R Whip said the SRC's focus on time poverty and notional hours received support from staff at the Learning & Teaching Conference on 27<sup>th</sup> March. He said work in this area is steadily advancing and that he had raised this in a meeting with QAA Scotland.

The aims of the SRC's Disabling the Narrative campaign are to educate disabled students about their rights and the support available to them throughout their time at University in terms of the University's responsibilities under the Equality Act. The campaign also aims to highlight examples of inclusive curricula and challenge policies which are currently causing disabled students difficulties, as well as look at wider policy issues in this area and highlight systemic and cultural issues facing disabled students. The SRC plan to work alongside staff to

achieve these aims and planned action includes the creation of a Disabled Students' Guide. H Pentleton-Owens is currently working on the guide alongside The Advice Centre and will consult the University's Disability Service for their input. The guide will be released in tandem with a poster campaign centred around raising awareness of academic ableism and disabled students' rights. The SRC will also be formulating a list of requests for the University around policies and processes and trying to ensure staff receive the necessary training to support disabled students. H Pentleton-Owens is currently planning an event which will allow staff a space to receive support on how they can support disabled students and ask questions regarding their duties and inclusive curriculum design.

- **Class Representative Conference Update**

R Whip expressed his thanks to T Frater for his help in running the event.

H Pentleton-Owens expressed her thanks to R Whip for organising the Class Rep Conference and commended him on the delivery of a successful event.

- **AOCB**

L Thomson said she recently attended a Class Representative meeting and there was a consensus among attendees that staff seem irritated by the rise in extension requests from students. She said this would be raised at the Life Sciences Portfolio committee and asked if it is perhaps indicative of a wider issue across Colleges.

R Whip said the issue within Life Sciences stemmed from the fact staff only check for extension requests once per week. He said the wider issue of staff discontent with extension requests was discussed at the Learning & Teaching Committee. M Hendry asked if the SRC would be willing to send out comms asking students not to submit short-term extension requests, however, the SRC emphatically refused to do this. R Whip said there seems to be an incorrect assumption from staff that students are submitting short-term extension requests simply because they can. He said the SRC has been vocal about not allowing the University to make this baseless assumption. He encouraged the incoming Sabbatical Officers to promote staff consultation with students regarding why they require short-term extensions, rather than making incorrect assumptions.

H Pentleton-Owens said a lot of discussions around Good Cause centre around the negative perception of the policy from staff. She said the Sabbatical Officers will investigate ways this issue can be tackled.

N Mary McLaughlin asked if there was any update on Schools using an automated extension system.

H Pentleton-Owens said this was raised in the Disability Implementation Review group. She said that one of the arguments for not automating the short-term extension system stems from the fact extension applications can contain disclosures of disability or trauma and these require services to be signposted to students. She said there are mixed feelings from staff regarding automation, however, M Hendry has said it would be a good system for short-term extensions and would be effective for signposting services to students. H Pentleton-Owens

said she has significant concerns over this from a welfare perspective. She said discussions are ongoing.

R Whip said automation could improve waiting times, however, it may cause more student applications to be rejected which could lead to lower rates of student satisfaction. He said the SRC will meet with Michael Murray from the College of Social Sciences to discuss automated extensions. R Whip said the College of Arts has introduced automated extensions already, however other Colleges have not. He said automated extensions could solve some problems, however, they may not be an effective solution overall, especially with regards to signposting services to students.

S Blackburn said, as a disabled student, to apply for extensions this semester she had to submit a form which was only able to be submitted via her student desktop. She said she had issues logging in remotely to do this which resulted in her having to travel to campus to submit it when she was unwell. She asked if any other Council members had experienced the same issue.

Several Council members said they had experienced this issue.

K Prentice said this issue came up at the Learning & Teaching Committee. She said, to use the College of Arts extension form, students must log into the Glasgow Anywhere desktop, however, she said there are issues with this. She said the College is looking into standardising the process as the current system is proving difficult for some students. K Prentice spoke to Sarah Richardson regarding trialling flexible deadlines or allowing students to set their own deadlines and that the College of Arts is looking into this.

H Pentleton said the Sabbatical Officers will investigate the matters raised regarding short-term extension requests and will follow-up on the complicated procedures for submitting requests, raised by Council members.

I Duane said the use of the Glasgow Anywhere desktop is inconsistent across Schools as some use it while others do not. She asked if there was a reason why it must be used.

H Pentleton-Owens said its use stems from the fact there is no standardised approach to submitting short-term extension requests, with individual Schools instead opting for the approach which suits their needs.

O Simon said the Barclay Medical Practice now charges £10 for evidence to support student Good Cause claims. She said she did not feel this was right.

H Pentleton-Owens said the University unfortunately cannot influence this as the Barclay Medical Practice is independent, however, there are ongoing discussions regarding removing the burden of evidence and developing understanding on what constitutes evidence in a Good Cause claim and what should be required.

H Pentleton-Owens expressed her congratulations to the newly elected University rector, Ghassan Abu Sittah, due to be installed on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

H Pentleton-Owens said this year's Council Dinner will take place on May 17<sup>th</sup> on the University campus. Invitations will be sent out w/c 1<sup>st</sup> April.

- **Date of next meeting** – Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2024