

## MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY THE 21ST NOVEMBER 2024 AT 6.00 PM

ROOM 201, MCINTYRE BUILDING AND ZOOM

Present: As per sederunt

Apologies: L Wong, M Thomson, K Kirkpatrick, A Garg, L Alhusaini

Attending: P Swinton, G Connor, J Small

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### 1) Welcome, Apologies and Sederunt

P Moran Ruiz referenced an email sent to Council members regarding the requirements they must meet to have their role recognised on their transcript. These are – attendance at 3 Council meetings (online or in person), submission of 4 Council reports, completion and submission of Conflict and Register of Interests form by given deadline and confirmation at end of year that no circumstances have changed with regards to the latter, or submission of a new form if circumstances have changed (confirmation/new form must be submitted by given deadline). He reminded Council members to send their apologies to any Council meetings in advance, so that extenuating circumstances can be considered when awarding HEAR recognition.

P Moran Ruiz reminded Council members to bring their own water bottles to meetings, as there is no water cooler in Room 201.

### 2) Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of previous meeting approved.

I Duane said the SRC's GBV Counsellor is available for online appointments for students at Dumfries Campus. She said the University's Safeguarding Team also conduct consultation sessions with students on the Dumfries Campus to see how provisions can be improved.

I Duane said the Molly Hankinson artwork has now been installed on the Dumfries Campus.

I Duane said a meeting took place after the last Welfare Forum regarding establishing a sensory wellbeing room on campus. This work is ongoing and is being undertaken as part of Disability History Month.

## 2) Save Our Scottish Unis Campaign

Last year this campaign was launched by the St Andrews University Student Association in response to cuts to higher education funding and the precarious situation of the sector. The campaign is being relaunched with an open letter to First Minister John Swinney and Minister for Further Education Graeme Dey. The letter aims to unite Scottish university unions behind the campaign and seeks to address the issue of Scottish universities over-relying on the growth of student numbers. P Moran Ruiz said this unsustainable growth is responsible for worsening conditions of education quality, non-academic student experience and services provision. P Moran Ruiz has been in contact with the President of the St Andrews University Student Association and has suggested some amendments to the demands in the open letter with a view to strengthening the campaign's case. A suggested amendment is to include a reference to the specific funding uplift being demanded to remove the need to rely on international student fees. P Moran Ruiz also suggested contextualising the demands to convey a sense of the hardship currently being experienced by all students and to ensure that the demands do not seem unintentionally hostile to international students. He also suggested that the importance of free tuition be heavily emphasised. P Moran Ruiz said he suggested that the open letter convey a clear roadmap for the wider campaign, beyond the open letter. He also suggested the presentation of the open letter be altered to make it more accessible.

## 4) Consideration of Motion to EGM

The SRC held an Extraordinary General Meeting on 13/11/2024 called in response to a request from students to discuss a motion entitled 'Divestment Cannot Wait.' The EGM served as a space to gather the views of the students in attendance, so that these views could be brought to Council. Although there were many views raised at the EGM, the SRC tried to emphasise the common ground between the views of itself as an organisation and those of the students in attendance. The core themes from the views expressed by students at the EGM included the desire for the SRC to: explore more avenues which support divestment; emphasise the gulf in views between the student body and University senior management on this issue; increase transparency and demonstration of support to the student community and enhance the SRC's proactivity on divestment lobbying. P Moran Ruiz said there was acknowledgment from students of the barriers the SRC faces with regards to pursuing divestment as it has no direct control over the University's financial decisions. P Moran Ruiz noted there was clear distress from some of the student attendees who disagreed with the University's investment practices. He said the SRC Executive have deliberated heavily on the recommendations from the EGM, and,

while the matter will undergo Council discussion, the Executive have already begun working on some of the recommendations.

P Moran Ruiz said arms divestment was voted down at the University Court meeting on 20/11/2024. In response to this decision, the SRC released a statement and press release strongly condemning the decision and assuring the student body it would continue to pursue divestment and explore other avenues of work to further this cause. Given the recommendation at the EGM for greater transparency, the SRC publicised its view and perspective on the matter via its statement and press release. Due to the result from Court, the matter of arms divestment will no longer be on the agenda at this high level of University governance. As such, the SRC believes it must take further action to bring the matter back to this level. P Moran Ruiz said despite an open letter from students to the University last year calling for divestment, student action on the Gilmorehill Campus, and strong student engagement with the SRI policy survey, the University Senior Management Group and other members of Court have deemed this engagement not sufficiently representative of the student body.

P Moran Ruiz said, in light of the recommendations from the EGM and the time-sensitive nature of this issue, he submitted an emergency motion to Council on 21/11/2024 calling for the coordination of a University-wide student referendum on arms divestment. He said the motion emphasises the significance of student views and how these have been undermined by decisions made at senior levels in the University. He added that it demonstrates the significant level of student mobilisation on this matter and the importance of students as stakeholders of the University. P Moran Ruiz said the referendum would entail an open vote for all students of the University to show whether they want the University to divest from the arms trade or not, adding that the SRC believes there was a clear anti-divestment bias in the publicity and questions of the University's previously circulated SRI policy survey. He said the referendum would unequivocally demonstrate the student body's view on divestment from arms companies, in a way which the University's senior management group would have to see as being sufficiently representative of the student voice. He said the SRC aims to learn from the clear failures of the University's SRI policy consultation process and work to get divestment back on the agenda at a high University level. He said the referendum would provide a clear mandate for this. He noted that this would be the first non-NUS related referendum in the SRC's history.

P Moran Ruiz opened the floor for any comments on the update for recommendations from the EGM.

D Calvert referenced the mention of pursuing divestment by 'any available avenue.' He asked if the proposers of the EGM motion clarified what these avenues would be.

P Moran Ruiz said not all attendees were proposers of the motion, however, all attendees were in favour of full divestment. He said suggestions included looking beyond conversations with senior management, exploring the best use of resources for the most impactful campaigning and the proposal of an SRC-organised demonstration prior to the Court meeting on 20/11/2024. P Moran Ruiz said the SRC believes the organisation of a referendum would be a more effective use of its resources than a demonstration. He said students were keen that all avenues were explored with accountability and transparency in mind.

Y Komery asked which members of Court voted against divestment and if students should be granted access to this information for greater transparency behind the University's decision-making.

P Moran Ruiz said the minutes of Court meetings are published publicly. He said students and staff were emailed after the meeting on 20/11/2024 regarding the outcome of the vote, and that a note on the vote split was included (7 for divestment, 14 against). He said it is not for the SRC to include names in the meeting minutes – this is the decision of the meeting chair and the meeting clerk. He said dissent can be recorded once the minutes have been circulated to Court members. P Moran Ruiz said there was a consensus among those who voted against divestment that it would have a negative impact on academic freedom and research opportunities with partner companies.

S Drijver-Headley asked, if divestment is added to the agenda for a future Court meeting, would the SRC organise a demonstration beforehand as requested by EGM motion.

H Busquier Cerdan said the SRC believes it is unlikely that divestment will be added to the agenda of any Court meeting in the near future. He said, through the referendum, the SRC plan to raise divestment at other high levels of the University.

P Moran Ruiz said the SRC was unable to organise a demonstration prior to the November meeting of Court as it needed to consult Council after the EGM and there was no time for this due to the Council meeting happening after Court. He said the SRC believes a referendum will be a more effective use of resources than a demonstration and will result in a stronger stance for divestment.

S Drijver-Headley asked if the SRC would support future student demonstrations and asked if demonstrations would be included as part of 'all avenues.'

I Duane said this may be possible but any demonstrations by the SRC would need to be undertaken in a way which did not disrupt student learning and teaching.

P Moran Ruiz opened the floor to comments on the Emergency Motion submitted.

D Calvert asked what the referendum question would look like and asked if the UofG Life app could be utilised to help coordinate the referendum.

P Moran Ruiz said the SRC would explore how a student referendum could be coordinated and promoted and whether the UofG Life app could be used for these purposes. He said the referendum question would be carefully written so as not to communicate any bias. He said accessibility for students to vote would also be a priority.

D Calvert expressed his support for the motion. He said, as SRC Court Assessor, he was dismayed by the result of Court and that he believes a referendum would conclusively show whether students support divestment or not. He encouraged Council members to vote in support of the motion.

S Maharaj asked if divestment could be achieved in gradual stages.

P Moran Ruiz said the aim of the SRI policy is to make it more agile, so that student/staff concerns with University investments can be raised and investigated if they arise. He said the policy, however, does not currently exclude investments in arms companies, so investments in arms companies would always be possible unless the policy was changed to exclude these investments.

I Duane said, since the submission of the motion, this story has been picked up by The National newspaper who have highlighted the discrepancy between the University's stance on divestment and the stance of students and staff. She said the newspaper also highlighted the relatively small amount of money the University has invested in arms companies and the ease with which it could divest from these companies.

Y Komery asked how the SRC can ensure that a diverse range of student opinion is reached in the referendum, beyond those who are already actively engaged with the issue.

P Moran Ruiz the SRC would explore how the referendum could best be promoted to engage all students. He said the aim of the referendum would be to gather opinion across the student body on this issue in a way that could unequivocally be termed sufficiently representative of the student body.

L Thompson asked what would happen if the referendum did not return the result the SRC hopes for.

P Moran Ruiz said the SRC Executive believe most students want divestment. He said the SRC would respect the result of the referendum either way and that a disappointing result would not prohibit it from continuing to represent students' views in this area.

D Harrison asked if there is a threshold for how many students need to vote in the referendum for it to be seen as sufficiently representative of the student population.

H Busquier Cerdan said there is no set threshold, however, the SRI consultation saw engagement from around 5% of the student population. He said the SRC would be aiming for to reach as many students as possible.

I Duane said the referendum would be a yes/no question and would be open to all UofG students from all its campuses. She said high engagement is expected and the SRC would heavily publicise the referendum.

N Laddad said he has heard that arms companies who the University invest in are now recruiting less students from UofG, as they do not wish to recruit from a university which publicly condemns them. He said students have moral concerns about the University's investments but are also conscious that divestment could have a negative impact on their career prospects.

A Chauhan said the 5% of student responses to the SRI policy came from the campaigning efforts of GAAF and JPS. She said the SRC should promote student demonstrations on campus if it wants to engage students in a referendum.

P Moran Ruiz said point 2 of the motions stipulates that the SRC will maintain an open dialogue with students regarding divestment. He said increased student awareness of prevalent issues is always positive.

A Chauhan said it is important that students are educated about the pros of divestment so that they vote to divest. She suggested a remembrance event could be organised to educate students about divestment.

P Moran Ruiz emphasised that the motion submitted is to signal intention to hold a referendum and that the logistics are still to be considered. He said the SRC cannot influence the result of a referendum and must respect the student voice on the issue.

L Thompson asked if campaigning around the referendum would need to be carried out from a neutral standpoint, or if the SRC could campaign for students to vote to divest. She said, if the SRC must remain neutral, this should be strongly communicated to the student groups on campus.

P Moran Ruiz said he would need discuss this with the rest of the SRC Executive. He said the SRC has taken a pro-divestment stance for over 10 years but recognised the importance of neutrality in referendums.

L Thompson said she disagrees with the view that many Engineering students feel they must pursue careers in the defence sector. She asked if the SRC could, however, look to ensure Engineering students are educated on alternative career options outwith the defence sector.

H Busquier Cerdan said one of the SRC's strategic aims is to explore student opportunities, so this would be considered when making any demands on the University.

A Castro asked if the SRC can help promote the support available to students during this stressful and disappointing time.

I Duane said the SRC does not accept the University's argument that keeping investments in arms companies allows it to support students. She said the University's Senior Management have acknowledged the significant impact that the University's continued investments have on the mental health of students. She said the SRC can look at re-sharing its resources on the support available for students.

D Calvert said the SRC exists to represent students, not arms companies. He said Council members should acknowledge, when voting for the motion, that the student body has rejected the University's arms investments unilaterally, and this includes provision of internships and investment in education from such companies.

N Gillies asked which University Senior Management bodies the SRC would approach regarding divestment. She also asked if the SRC could consider suggesting alternative ethical investments to the University's SMG.

P Moran Ruiz said the SRC would approach the Finance Committee, Court, Sanctuary Working Group and Humanitarian Response Working Group. With regards to ethical reinvestments, he said this is already embedded within the draft SRI policy under the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) funds. The issue is that the policy does not explicitly mention that arms companies will be excluded from investments.

Y Komery asked if the SRC would convey to students the arguments against divestment, as espoused by Court, as well as arguments for divestment, to ensure neutrality in the referendum.

P Moran Ruiz said the SRC does not represent Court so it is not required to portray its views to the student population. He said the previous SRC referendum saw two Sabbatical Officers support one outcome of the referendum, and the other two Sabbatical Officers support the other outcome. As such, he said there was room for contrasting views on the matter.

S Maharaj said it is now more difficult to secure employment than it once was. As such, she said this must be taken into consideration when taking action which may result in less employment opportunities for students. She said students may find it difficult to make a choice on this matter for that reason, but said they should not feel pressured into making a decision either way.

A Chauhan said when considering job opportunities, it is important to remember a genocide is currently taking place. She said maintaining careers prospects is not a

valid reason not to divest. A Chauhan rejected the University's reasoning that divestment would imply Glasgow University is not in favour of the UK having a defence sector. She also rejected the University's reasoning that divesting may hinder relationships with companies for research and development, positing that this research is fundamentally unethical in any case. She asked if the SRC could raise objections to the email the University Court sent students regarding the divestment vote.

P Moran Ruiz said the SRC was not involved in drafting the email in question. He said he could explore the possibility of recording his dissent in the minutes of the Court meeting.

Council voted on the Emergency Motion.

Motion passed with 33 (24 in the room, 9 online) votes for and 0 votes against.

## 5) Council Reports

Written Reports submitted -

### a) SRC President: Pablo Morán Ruiz

P Moran Ruiz provided an update on the work of the NSS Task Force. He said the SRC has discussed the need for the student voice to work in partnership with all levels of the University, working around the themes of consistency, student voice in communications, assessment and feedback, and engagement. P Moran Ruiz also shared concerns on creating student experience-related roles, citing the possibility this could lead to inconsistency, lack of structure and confusion for students. He also highlighted the need for student feedback to be taken onboard to enhance the theme of partnership across the institution. A report and action plan has now been submitted to Senior Management and it has recommended the group be active across the year to implement its action plan. P Moran Ruiz said the SRC will be looking at how this work can improve the student experience.

P Moran Ruiz attended a meeting of the Sanctuary Working Group on 29<sup>th</sup> October. He said he was pleased to learn the undergraduate travel bursary scheme has been extended to PGT asylum-seeking applicants. He said there is currently a 1:5 ratio for sanctuary scholarships, with 150 applicants per 30 scholarships. P Moran Ruiz said he will be working to see how support can be increased in this area. He also spoke with members of the Scholarships, Sanctuary and External Relations teams regarding increasing provisions for scholarships overall. P Moran Ruiz said he also attended the Humanitarian Response Working Group which is looking at how the University can



facilitate transitions for refugee and immigrant students who have been forcibly displaced from their homes by conflict.

b) VP Education: Heri Busquier Cerdan

Over the last month the SRC has been working on its 2023-24 Self Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP). He said this is a new way in which Scottish universities report to the Scottish Funding Council on their activities. The SRC's main contributions to the SEAP concern student partnership and engagement and supporting student success.

The Gilmorehill Class Rep Mixer took place in Gilchrist PG Café on 14/11/2024 and saw strong attendance from Class Reps. The SRC also held the first ever Class Rep Mixer on the Dumfries Campus. This was also strongly attended, with around 50% of Dumfries class reps in attendance.

The Student Teaching Award nominations open on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November. This year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event and H Busquier Cerdan strongly encouraged Council members to submit nominations.

L Thompson asked if Council members can be involved in helping to shortlist nominations this year.

H Busquier Cerdan said Council members will be contacted in due course about shortlisting.

c) VP Student Support: Iris Duane

I Duane said the SRC's Black History Month campaign has now concluded. She thanked all Council members who attended events and said the month's events saw a significant uplift in student engagement, including from student groups which the SRC does not traditionally reach. The month involved working on events in successful partnership with GUSA, the African Caribbean Society and both student unions. I Duane said the SRC also used its communications strategy to challenge some of the narratives around Black History Month and speak about Glasgow's colonial history. She said she has compiled a list of instructions for next year's VPSS for building upon the month's successes and thanked all those involved in the organisation and delivery of the event, including the SRC's PR, Events and Communication teams, J Small and M Card.

The SRC's Disabled Students History Month campaign is currently ongoing. I Duane said the SRC has officially launched the 'Disabled Students' Guide' with physical and

digital copies available. As part of the month, the SRC has also launched its 'World Changers Need Access' campaign which encourages students to provide feedback on their accessibility needs. This feedback will be used to lobby the University to meet students' physical, social and digital access requirements. These conversations are also being tied into lobbying the University for a sensory/wellbeing room on campus. I Duane encouraged Council members to attend the SRC events throughout the month, if able, and said the SRC are currently supporting a group of students who are interested in starting a Disabled Students' Society.

The United Nations Sixteen Days of Activism begins next week. The SRC will be observing this anti-GBV campaign and holding events which Council members are encouraged to attend. The SRC is supporting several clubs and societies with their events for this, as well as highlighting the self-defence classes being held by GUSA. On 28/11/2024 the Fight For The Night march will take place and I Duane highly encouraged Council members to attend.

I Duane said a student raised a concern to her regarding the late finish of the term this year due to the exam timetable. I Duane raised this with the University Principal and was told it cannot change next year, however, the University would look at scheduling an earlier term finish for the subsequent year.

The SRC observed Trans Day of Remembrance on 20/11/2024. The event saw increased attendance from the previous year.

d) VP Student Activities: Angelica Wilson

The SRC's Halloween in the Hunterian event took place on 31/10/2024. A Wilson said the event was a great success and thanked all those involved in the organisation and delivery of the event, especially the decorating and PR teams and SRC staff.

A Wilson said she is now sitting on the University's Sport Strategy and Planning group and that she has had an introductory meeting with Director of Sports, Euan Smith.

A Wilson said she had productive introductory goal-setting meetings with First Year representatives A Chauhan and L Wong.

The SRC is exploring how it can resolve issues around room bookings for clubs and societies. Meetings with Security and Facilities staff are being set up for discussions on this matter.

The SRC held a Clubs & Events Communication Workshop on 19/11/2024. A Wilson said the event was productive.

e) PGR Arts & Social Sciences Convenor: Misha Campello Gramelius

M Campello Gramelius attended a meeting with UCU to discuss a long-term project calling for PGR students to be given University staff status.

H Busquier Cerdan said he would be happy to continue this discussion offline.

f) UG Science and Engineering Convenor: Max Thomson

g) UG Social Sciences Convenor: Daniz Alasgarova

h) Biodiversity, One Health & Veterinary Medicine: Laura Thompson

i) Critical Studies School Rep: Una Dale

j) Mathematics and Statistics School Rep: Ellie Hughes

k) Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing School Rep: Ebrahim Rezaei

l) Modern Languages and Culture School Rep: Duncan Calvert

m) Molecular Biosciences: Elizabeth Barnett

n) Age Equality Officer: Suzanne Blackburn

S Blackburn said the Mature Students Association is moving out of its current building and onto the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the QMU building on 29/11/2024. She said there is a welfare concern for high-risk students in the association and its Welfare Officer has reported these concerns to University staff. She said the SRC must monitor this situation.

I Duane said she is aware of the move and said the matter has been discussed at Student Experience Committee. She said the situation will be monitored.

o) LGBTQ+ Officer: Naomi Gillies

p) Widening Participation Officer: Amy Hutchison

A Hutchison attended a meeting of the Library Committee and was given assurances that accessibility is a priority of Library staff. She said they are actively working towards creating safe spaces and have considered using sensory mapping to widen accessibility. Staff also spoke about their Alternative Formats Service which makes texts more accessible to students.

P Moran Ruiz said the SRC Executive are currently in the process of setting up a meeting with B Oliva, Alternative Formats Manager, to discuss how this service might be applied to teaching materials.

- q) Widening Participation Officer: Hannah Watters
- r) General Rep: Sarah Millar
- s) First Year Rep: Leo Wong

6) AOCB

A Storer said she met with the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities and the PG Arts Convenor to discuss funding and safety concerns around Study Abroad. Staff members assured A Storer that their comments would be taken into consideration and that staff would work to create new information resources for students by February.

L Thompson said undertaking a year abroad as part of an integrated Masters course is very difficult for students in Life Sciences and Engineering, owing to the lack of resources from the University. She asked if the SRC could approach the Study Abroad team about increasing resources for students in this area.

D Calvert said he plans to meet with Year Abroad Class Reps soon and will bring their feedback to the next Academic Forum.

H Busquier Cerdan said this matter could be discussed further at Academic Forum and then followed up with the University.

B Asmelash said students have reported hearing an alarm coming from the Boyd Orr building multiple times during the day.

I Duane said she would raise this with the University Estates team.

CJ Adebayo Omoaka said she attended the Hunterian Strategic Development Board and staff said they were keen to engage more students and young people. She said they are also creating new brochures and asked if these could be displayed at the SRC Welcome Point. She said they are also keen for all students to access their collections for research purposes.

I Duane said Council members with feedback on how the Hunterian can increase its student engagement should contact CJ Adebayo Omoaka. She said this could also be discussed at Welfare Forum.

S Blackburn said she is looking for access to the Hunterian archives for her dissertation, but this is proving difficult. She said their processes for student access must be streamlined

S Maharaj suggested the Hunterian could hold workshops for different Schools utilising their collections.

N Pooley said there will be lots of activity taking place for Sixteen Days of Activism, including several placard-making sessions ahead of the Fight For The Night march. She encouraged Council members to attend these sessions and the march itself.

Y Komery said there has been discussion within his School of certain programmes being cut or rebranded and new ones being introduced. He said his School is also discussing implementing a Student Voice Forum.

P Moran Ruiz said these matters could be discussed at Academic Forum.

E Rezaei said students have been trying to establish a prayer room in the Wolfson Medical Building. He asked if Council members would be interested in establishing prayer/faith rooms in their own Schools.

I Duane said there are currently a variety of prayer rooms on campus. She asked E Rezaei to contact her directly so she could assist with the student campaign in the Wolfson Medical Building.

H Busquier Cerdan said any Council members who are having difficulty completing their Council reports should contact their line managers or consult the Council handbook.

7) Date of next meeting – Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2024