

# Student Council Meeting Minutes

**Minutes of the second meeting of the Student Council held on Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at 6pm in Students' Union Space, Stafford.**

**Present:** Dommati Durga Prasad (**DP**- Student Councillor), Matthew Lowe (**ML**- Student Councillor), Rory Wilde (**RW**- Student Councillor), Charley Hill (**CH**- Student Councillor), Lawrence Parkes (**LP**- Student Councillor), Sam Richardson (**SR**- Student Councillor), Louise Crane (**LC**- Student Councillor), Purnachandarrao Eravelli (**PE**- Student Councillor). **8 voters.**

**In Attendance:** Katy Mitchell (**KM**- Student Trustee & Chair), Katie Wynne (**KW**- Student Engagement Assistant & Secretary), Margaret Mulholland (**MM**- Membership Services Manager), Jamie Robertson (**JR**- President), Emma Harris (**EH**- Commercial Services Officer), Kim Hargreaves (**KH**- Education & Welfare Officer), Gary Richardson (**GR**- Student Activities Officer), Liat Norris (**LN**- Student Trustee), Malik Moiz Uddin (**MU**- Student Trustee), Dheeraj Kanupuru (**DK**- NUS Delegate), Rowan Ashe (**RA**- Student). Denise Ashe (**DA**- Student), Anthony Kiely (Non-Student).

**Apologies for Absence:** Rebekah Kelly (**RK**- Student Councillor), Daniel Smith (**DS**- Student Councillor), Arfan Mubashar (**AM**- Student Councillor), Vic Casambros (**VC**- Communications Officer),

**Not Present:** None.

**All apologies recorded above were accepted.**

**Apologies received late:** Philip Slater (**PS**- Student Councillor)

No.	Item, Discussion and Action	By Whom and By When
	<p>Due to an accident on the motorway the Chair of Student Council had not yet arrived, so <b>KH</b> opened the meeting.</p> <p><b>GR</b> highlighted that <b>RW</b> was also stuck in traffic.</p>	
1	<p><b><u>Standing Items</u></b></p> <p><b>Notification of Early Departure</b> – None.</p> <p><b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b> - The 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011 Student Council minutes were confirmed as an accurate record, apart from a grammatical error on page 2.</p> <p><b>Action: To correct the error.</b></p> <p><b>Action Points of the Previous Meeting</b> - The following are still to be completed/fed back to Student Council:</p>	KW

	<p><b>Action: To look into filming Student Council meetings.</b></p> <p><b>Action: To come up with a new report format.</b></p> <p><b>Action: To discuss sponsorship with GR, EH and Jonathan Pace and come back with a formulated discussion.</b></p> <p>All other action points had been completed. <b>KH</b> highlighted that the officers who had not written a report had filmed one, but that the camera had been accidentally taken home by <b>VC</b> when he went home ill.</p> <p><b>Notification of Any Other Business</b> – <b>RA</b> highlighted that he had brought paperwork related to item 2.11. <b>GR</b> added a discussion about Derby officers attending the next Council and a discussion regarding Wednesday Afternoons.</p> <p><b>Conflicts of Interest</b> – No conflicts noted.</p> <p><b>Reports</b> – <b>KH</b> submitted a written report at the meeting. There were no questions regarding the officer reports.</p> <p><b>KM and EH arrived at the meeting. KM took over Chair duties.</b></p>	<p><b>VC</b></p> <p><b>JR, VC, KH, GR, EH</b></p> <p><b>PS</b></p>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b><u>Items of business</u></b></p> <p><b>2.1. Chair Update</b>– To <b>inform</b> Council of the Chair Training received.</p> <p>The Chair informed Student Council that she had attended NUS Chair of Student Council Training, meaning there would be some slight changes to how meetings run. The Chair would now be running through how the meeting is to go ahead before it starts. It was pointed out that if someone put an item on the agenda they would be known as the ‘proposer’ and that someone could choose to ‘oppose’. There would now be closing points before going to a vote and the Chair would make sure that everyone understood before going to a vote or moving to the next item.</p> <p><b>2.2. Newly Elected Student Councillors</b>- To <b>welcome</b> to Student Council and run through any ground rules set at the previous meeting.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed <b>SR, LC</b> and <b>PE</b> who had been successfully elected during the SU By-Elections held the previous week. It was pointed out that there were no particular ground rules, but that everyone would act appropriately and behave! They were informed that apologies must be sent by 48 hours after a missed meeting, but preferably before a meeting and that two missed meetings without apologies would mean deemed resignation.</p>	

**2.3. Election of Deputy Chair of Student Council– To vote** again for the Deputy Chair of Council, after a tied vote at the previous meeting.

The vote was tied at the last Student Council meeting, so the vote needed to be taken again. The Deputy Chair would only be called upon if the Chair was not present. There was a discussion on whether this should be postponed due to **VC** not being present but it was unanimously decided to go ahead and read **VC**'s reasons for putting himself forward from previous minutes.

**LN** left the room.

There were 7 Student Councillors present to vote and after a discussion Student Council voted:

Vic Casambros: 6 votes

Liat Norris: 1 vote

**Vic Casambros to be Deputy Chair of Student Council.**

**2.4. Member Appeals Committee – To find** 6 further volunteers to be available to sit on Member Appeals Committee when called upon.

**MM** needed to find a further 6 volunteers to sit on Member Appeals Committees when called upon. **MM** explained that the Disciplinary Committee would make a decision on a case, i.e. banning a student from LRV for a month; and that if the student wanted to appeal they would appeal to the Member Appeals Committee. It was rare that one was called, but there had been one recently.

**SR, LP, LC, ML, DP** and **PE** put themselves forward.

**2.5. Criteria for Associate Membership and Temporary Membership**

This item had been discussed at the previous Student Council meeting, but needed voting on again due to quoracy.

Due to the changes in the SU Constitution Student Council now had the power to 'elect and remove from associate membership of the Union such persons as they consider to be fit. The Student Council shall determine the form of application for associate memberships and associate membership shall be subject to such rights and obligations as the Student Council consider appropriate.' There is no mention of temporary membership in the Constitution as it was intended to be abolished, but references had been made in the Bye-Laws.

**There were three areas that needing voting on:**

1. That all reference to Temporary Membership should be removed from the Bye-Laws.

**Approved unanimously.**

2. That Student Council delegate the day to day administration of Associate Membership to staff on the understanding that if an applicant or existing associate is considered unsuitable for any reason the matter is referred to Council.

**Approved unanimously.**

3. That Council consider increasing the cost of Associate Membership to reflect its true value. (Currently the SU's funding equates to £40 per head, whilst the real cost per student is around £53, with Associate Membership currently costing £5).

**Trustees will make a recommendation at the next Student Council meeting. It was agreed that it will continue to be £5 until a decision was made as there were Associate Memberships waiting to be processed.**

**Action: Trustees to bring recommendation regarding the price of Associate Membership to Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December Student Council meeting.**

**Trustees**

## **2.6. Students to attend Academic Board and Student Experience Committee**

There was space for one further student to attend Academic Board with **JR** and **KH**; and for two students (one being international) to attend the Student Experience Committee with **JR** and **GR**.

**KH** highlighted that Academic Board was a very important meeting, where decisions are made and influenced; and that if you put yourself forward you must turn up.

**ML, LP, LN, DA, MU** and **SR** put themselves forward.

Their reasons for doing so were:

**ML:** Believed that things do need to change, that he was well known in his faculty, was fussy about getting things right and felt it was a great opportunity to talk to the committee.

**LP:** Was originally elected into the Academic Affairs position to work closely with **KH** and the **SU**, had worked for the **SU** for a long time and had the experience to take things forward and get voices heard.

**LN:** Pledged to lobby against cuts in staff and at the University and the Academic Board is where those changes could be made. He stated he was student focussed and that it was difficult to criticise the University if not involved in it.

**DA:** Had been involved in the International Association Committee, was aware of student issues, including mature student issues. As a mature student she could see lecturers and students point of view.

**MU:** Was a Stafford student and felt that not much had been done to overcome students' issues; that services needed updating and would like to go to the highest level to discuss them.

**SR:** Had been on two courses so had a good overview of education at Staffordshire University and didn't have a part time job so would be committed to attending the meetings.

In order to have a quorate vote those nominating themselves stayed in the room and a vote took place via a show of hands:

Matt Lowe: 1

Lawrence Parkes: 2

Liat Norris: 0

Denise Ashe: 0

Malik: 2

Sam: 2

The vote tied three ways so took place again.

Lawrence Parkes: 2

Malik Moiz Uddin: 2

**Sam Richardson: 3**

#### **Sam Richardson to attend Academic Board.**

Now the Student Experience Committee was discussed, with **GR** pointing out that everyone who put themselves forward for it should have passion about the experience of all students. The Chair highlighted that one of the places on this committee was for an international student and asked if there were any international students interested. **PE** put himself forward and stated that as an international student he was aware of the issues these students face, and then stepped out for the vote to take place.

#### **Student Council unanimously voted for Purnachandarrao Eravelli to attend the Student Experience Committee.**

**LC** and **LP** put themselves forward for the other student place on the Student Experience Committee.

**LC** stated that she had organised two Welcome Weeks, attended WUG (Welcome to University Group) and WPG (Welcome Planning Group),

worked at the Students' Union, interacted with the International Office, and so was aware of lots of different students' experiences at University.

**LP** stated that he had worked for the Students' Union for a long time in various positions – such as working on Welcome Week, bars, shop and reception. He had a good grasp of what students did/didn't like.

After a discussion those nominated agreed that Student Council could assume they would for vote for themselves, in order for it to be a quorate vote:

Louise Crane: 3

**Lawrence Parkes: 4**

**Lawrence Parkes would attend the Student Experience Committee.**

**RW arrived at the meeting.**

### **2.7. Edward Bauer, Vice President Education at the University of Birmingham Guild of Students** – To further **discuss** the suspension of Edward Bauer (Liat Norris)

**LN** stated that Edward Bauer, Vice President Education at The University of Birmingham Guild of Students, was arrested on 16th September for peacefully suspending a banner protesting university fees and education cuts during the Lib Dem party conference. It was claimed that the University of Birmingham had suspended his status as a student and banned him from entering campus with all his University accounts being shut down without any notice.

This item was discussed at length at the previous Student Council meeting, but was not voted on. As the proposer, **LN** felt that Edward Bauer was wrongfully arrested, wrongly suspended and that it was a breach of Union democracy. **KH** opposed the item saying that she would be uncomfortable going against another Union and the decisions they had made.

After a lengthy discussion around whether it was right or not that the individual was suspended, questions were also raised regarding what a vote either way would mean for the SU and students. It was highlighted that a vote **for** would mean actively condemning the actions of Birmingham Guild of students and a vote **against** would mean doing nothing.

For: 0

Against: 8

**The Students' Union would not be getting involved in this matter.**

### **2.8. OMG Presence** – To discuss the better use of Students' Union venues to promote One Media Group. (Rory Wilde)

The Chair clarified that **RW** was a member of OMG. Having spoken to

other members of OMG that day the Chair informed **RW** that OMG had a promo team and a budget and felt that this wasn't something that would benefit from being discussed at Student Council, as an organisational matter. **RW** was advised to talk to James Deacon.

**2.9. Blackboard** - To discuss putting more pressure on the University to ensure that Blackboard is properly updated. (Rory Wilde)

As the proposer **RW** highlighted that in his personal experience after two years at the University the only things that were available for him on Blackboard were two handbooks and two documents, which he felt was not good enough. Apparently the justification for this was that the University did not want to give students the option of looking at Blackboard rather than attending a lecture. No one chose to propose this discussion point and a discussion was held on how to approach this issue.

It was highlighted that research should take place to identify which courses were problematic as it was identified that others present had had good experiences with Blackboard. It was identified that STARS may be able to help this research.

**Action: RW and KH to work together on this issue, with those interested in taking part.**

**KH/RW**

**2.10. Students' Union Suggestion Cards** – To discuss suggestion cards as a way of engaging students with Student Council. (Louise Crane)

There was a discussion about using existing Suggestion Cards to promote awareness of Student Council. A discussion took place highlighting the various ways this could be carried out, including a report brought to Student Council with all suggestions included, report with only significant suggestions included and advertising Student Council on the suggestion cards.

**Action: To move the suggestion card box in The Lounge.**

**KH**

It was agreed that significant suggestions would be brought to Student Council, that a promotion of Student Council would be added to email responses to suggestion cards via a signature and that posters about Student Council could be placed near the suggestion cards.

**Action: To action the above points regarding suggestion cards.**

**JR/VC**

**2.11. STARS** – To discuss accountability, function and developing the programme. (Rowan Ashe)

The Chair questioned whether this was a Student Council issue, suggesting that **RA** discuss it with the staff directly involved in STARS. **RA** felt that it should be discussed and handed out paperwork referring to the STARS policy and the Education Act. **RA** stated that the policy relating to STARS was seven years out of date.

**These document included:**

*'This union resolves:*

- *To mandate the full time officer responsible to work with the university to create a new policy that is up to date, definitive in way STARs are elected and support the values of the students' union and its charitable goals.*
- *To work with the university to develop a better system for electing STARs that best suits the needs of students.*

**[Optional Amendment]**

*This union also resolves:*

- *Under Bye Law Seven: Elections, Referenda and Petitions, to remove Section 12.2, amending the numbering sections 12.3 and 12.4 to read 12.2 and 12.3 respectively.*
- *To mandate the full time officer responsible, to bring to council a proposal for the amendment of Bye Law Seven: Elections, Referenda and Petitions, to include a clause providing for the election of Student Academic Councillors once such steps as are reasonable practicable to secure that the elections for STARs are fairly and properly conducted.'*

**JR** informed **RA** that it was only the second year STARs had been fully functioning, with two permanent members of staff at the Students' Union working on it with the support of the officers and their manager. He admitted that it wasn't a perfect system yet, but that the Students' Union was moving to improve it.

**MM** provided a point of information, informing Student Council that the Students' Union were committed to revising the STARs policy before the end of the academic year, were working with NUS to improve the programme and that Student Academic Councillor elections would be carried out in the same way as all SU Elections.

**KH** stated that she was currently doing everything she could to improve STARs.

**DA** highlighted that she would like to work with **KH** on STARs.

After a short recess **MM** informed Student Council that she didn't feel they could vote on this item at this point in time as the motion was flawed. The SU were currently holding elections for Student Academic Councillors to sit on Council and these could not be stopped without advice from the Returning Officer, Nick Bell. She agreed that there was more work to be done, but that the University was required to have systems of representation. The University had recognised their system was flawed, which is why the Students' Union was invited to work with them on it. All the current STARs were asked at training how they were elected, with very few being undemocratic. The way these STARs are

being elected onto Student Council was democratic and had been discussed at high levels within the University without any issues.

**RA** didn't completely agree with the discussion but chose to withdraw the motion at that stage and would look into it further. The Chair advised **RA** to discuss this with **MM, JR, KH** and Itsham Pevrez.

**2.12. Gender Neutral Toilets** - To discuss ensuring both gender-neutral and gender-specific toilets are provided. (Liat Norris)

**LN** highlighted that the Students' Union used to have gender neutral toilets, but that they were not currently open. **LN** felt that there should always be access to these facilities. **EH** agreed that in their current state they were not useable. There was a general consensus that having gender neutral toilets was a good thing, but that for them to be used they needed updating.

**Action: To investigate ways of re-opening the gender neutral toilets, follow up the items below and feedback to next Student Council.**

**EH**

- To work towards ensuring both gender-neutral and gender-specific toilets are provided in both union and university buildings.
- To make feminine hygiene services available in any gender-neutral facilities as is done in gendered toilets, for those students with particular needs associated with the female sex.
- To mandate the full time officer with oversight of communications to publicise the existence of these provisions, their locations and the reasons for them at the beginning of every year.
- To support all Trans students who wish to use the facilities appropriate to their self defined gender, whether these facilities be gender-neutral or gender-specific.
- To seek to provide training on LGBT awareness to all staff, including security staff.
- To make clear to students and those providing entertainment at union events, that similar to our Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment policy, discriminatory language or actions will not be tolerated.
- To make sure that any form in use within the Union only asks for gender when absolutely necessary, and in those cases leaves the answer box of "gender" empty, to be filled in as appropriate. To lobby the University to do similar.

**Action: To write a policy regarding the above.**

**LN**

**2.13. 30<sup>th</sup> November Strikes** – To discuss encouraging and supporting students walking out or taking part in other non-violent solidarity action. (Liat Norris)

**LN** requested that the Students' Union encourage and support students

walking out during the strikes. **JR** clarified that University staff were planning on striking due to pensions and that some Students' Union staff were part of the same union which was planning to do this, but would not be striking. He highlighted that Students' Union staff had just had a change in their pension, essentially making them worse off, so as a trustee he wouldn't be comfortable to then support University staff. **JR** has no issue with students supporting lecturers, but stated that it would be hypocritical for the Students' Union to get involved as an organisation.

**2.14. Union Forums** - To further discuss liberation forums and forums that could be set up.

The Chair suggested Student Council should get in touch with a full time officer if they had any suggestions.

**2.15. Reports from Conferences and training attended since last Student Council meeting.**

Student Council had read the report.

**JR** highlighted that Student Councillors were Student Councillors 24/7, meaning that many discussions could take place outside of these meetings.

**3** **Representation**

No discussion.

**4** **Any Other Business**

Wednesday Afternoons – It was highlighted that some members of the University had stated that some lectures must take place on Wednesday afternoons as there was no alternative, but that Michael Gunn had stated that students should be free to take part in activities. This is an ongoing issue which the Students' Union is focussing on.

Derby SU – **JR** asked Student Council if they had any objections to officers from Derby came to observe the next Student Council meeting. It was highlighted that this was going to be a very busy meeting, but that no one had an issue with them attending.

**5** **Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Student Council meeting is scheduled to take place at **6pm on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December** in Cadman Conference Room, Stoke.