



# Trustee Board Meeting

19<sup>th</sup> January 2020

3pm – 5pm

**Chair:** Maxine Thomas-Asante

## **In attendance:**

Maxine Thomas-Asante, Valeria Racu, Inaki Arizabalaga, Katie Saunders, Charli Keely, Peadar Connolly-Davey, Oscar Ward, Youssra Elmagboul, Nidah Kaiser, Sohane Yahya, Anabelle Jones, Hisham Parchment-Pryce

## Introduction

**Maxine:** Welcome! There are two items for decision today and two for discussion. We will also run through apologies, approval of last meeting's minutes, and the General Managers Report. Firstly, are there any conflicts of interest to raise about any items to be discussed today?

## Conflicts of Interest

Both **Charli** and **Katie** raised potential conflict of interest with the decision on Account For This, being good friends with the person in charge of A4T. It was decided by those in attendance that Charli and Katie may be a part of the A4T discussions but may reserve their vote if it is felt there is a conflict of interest.

## Ratification of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

**Oscar** confirmed the minutes from the last meeting to be correct and accurate.

## Action Points from the Previous Meeting

1. Done
2. A finance report will be a part of this meeting however we may need to delay a full financial report from this meeting
3. There is a possibility of the bar being refurbished and a stage being introduced, however this is being left for now and Peadar will liaise with Khaled when it does arise



4. This point was discussed during an Executive Committee Meeting
5. Complaints will be discussed in today's meeting
6. Imogen (Campaigns Officer) is not present to discuss
7. Anna gave refresher Trustee training during a previous Executive Committee Meeting

#### Ratification of Email Decisions

**Valeria:** There was a walkout on Thursday. As part of the walkout, taking into account the UGM motion, we closed the SU shop for 2 hours. We asked Khaled his opinion on this on Tuesday however didn't receive a swift response. We also didn't chase this. We therefore didn't have time to check with the Trustees if you were okay with the closing of the shop. We're sorry for the lack of prompt and transparency in this instance.

**Maxine:** We are sorry, and it won't happen again. You are welcome to flag this as a complaint if you want to however.

#### Decisions: 1 – SU Complaints Procedure

**Valeria:** We've drafted a new SU complaints procedure. The procedure we have now isn't very useful and we flagged it as an issue at the start of our term. This new procedure goes hand in hand with a review of all our policies and procedures as some are non-existent or not fit for purpose. As decided at the previous Trustee Board we've prioritised the complaints procedure as we've received a high number of student to student complaints which we've had to handle on an ad-hoc basis. In discussions with Trustees we've agreed it's important to work quickly now on all other procedures (e.g. misconduct and disciplinary procedures). From researching other Students' Unions, we feel it's best to have a short and straight forward complaints procedure for the student. The paper presented today has already had some changes made since being sent out – such as the addition of third-party reporting. Currently only Susanna has access to our assault complaint procedure, however this would allow people to anonymously report if they wanted to.

**Maxine:** I'd like to open the floor to Trustees to make any comments or changes.

**Charli** raised the need for accountability and disciplinary procedures to ensure outcomes from complaints. Charli asked for all three of these procedures to be brought to the next Trustee meeting to be approved together.

**Anna** raised a POI that SU staff are governed by HR and employment law, feeding into the complaints procedure. The introduction of an accountability procedure may involve constitutional change and take longer than anticipated.

**Maxine** raised concern about introducing repercussions for sabbatical officers at present as the job roles as set out within the constitution are vague (making it difficult to comment on how they are fulfilling their roles).



**Sohane** proposed one complaints procedure for complaints against students and one for complaints against staff or sabbatical officers, to ensure students know who is reading their complaint.

**Anna:** We need to have a clear first step in the procedure. Someone who knows what they're doing and what the best process to follow is. My recommendation is that unless a complaint is about me all complaints come through me, and all decisions on next steps are approved by a Trustee. If a complaint is against me we can request it be sent to a sabbatical officer or someone different.

**Anna** raised that a complaints log could be introduced to the Trustee meetings, detailing how many complaints have been reported, a vague area of complaint, issue number, and status. This would ensure accountability.

Some members of the Trustee Board had concerns about introducing this procedure without an accompanying accountability and disciplinary procedure.

**Anna:** A majority of our complaints are low level and do not need disciplinary action. This current proposal would help with a majority of the complaints work.

**Maxine:** Ideally all procedures would be introduced together however it doesn't feel helpful to not pass this procedure as we don't also have the others. We are already receiving lots of complaints. We can approve this with reservations and make an email decision once changes have been made, however for now there are students who are struggling which this procedure would help.

It was agreed that the proposed procedure is better than what currently exists within the Students' Union. Concerns were aired around the lack of an accountability or disciplinary procedure accompanying this.

**Proposal:** Recommendations to be made about changes to the complaints procedure proposed in this meeting. These recommendations to be input by drafters and a vote to be carried out by Trustees to decide if they're happy with the procedure. A disciplinary procedure will aim to be drafted by the next Trustee meeting, with procedure going through an Executive Committee working group for approval.

**Proposal agreed.**

#### Decisions: 2 – Account for This Workshop Money

**Valeria:** A4T are not a society but they are a SU campaign. They are looking for £700 for a series of workshops on policy reading A4T is part of the sexual and gender based violence working group in the school and these workshops feed into that. This money would come out of the campaigns budget, which as Welfare and Campaigns co-president I would approve. I am also asking the Decolonising Group for money so ideally this would be reimbursed.



As the money would come from the Campaigns budget it was decided this did not need to be raised to the Trustee Board for approval.

## Discussions

### 1 – General Managers Meeting

#### **Anna:**

- We now have a Finance Manager (Kai) who is working through the backlog that we've had from not having someone in post for the last 6 months. We've set timelines to get accounts available for budgeting for next year. We are being audited in February and will know last year's accounts by April
- The Students' Union is struggling for space
- The future of radio is precarious, and Lucia's fixed term contract ends in summer. As a small SU team to lose two members of staff would impact the work we do a lot. We need to discuss, once we have proper financial information, what decisions we will make for these two staff member posts. We would like to work towards not reducing staff member hours, and I believe there are alternative funding sources for the radio. I would like to make a decision about Lucia's position sooner rather than later, so she isn't left with uncertainty
- We've had to ban some people from our bar due to bad behaviour. This is mostly non-SOAS students who are coming into our spaces

A discussion was had around how Lucia's role came about. While the UGM motions originally asked for a sabbatical officer, it was decided with the proposers that we would introduce the role for 1 year as paid for with SU reserves, to be hopefully extended after 1 year with money provided by the school.

### 2 – UGM Strikes Motion

UNISON had a 76% turnout to balloting and 75% voted for strike action. UCU had a 50.5% turnout to balloting with 82% voting for strike action.

**Anna:** An emergency UGM told us that students want to support strike action. You need to understand your role as a trustee and your relationship with the decision-making process. You have to think about the organisation. Today we need to discuss potential strike situations so you're prepared for decisions.

**Youssra:** In 2018 a decision was taken to the trustee board before the strikes that the union would back the strikes and shut down. Students felt they weren't properly consulted in this. We need to avoid that and will bring these topics to students. During the closure the shop and bar were closed, and all staff were not on site.



**Anna:** The previous strikes were 14 days and so is this one.

From the UGM we know students want solidarity however what solidarity looks like wasn't defined. Our options can range, in the extremes, from one tweet in support to being closed for 14 days with no staff working from home. If we do close there may be financial implications from closing the bar and shop (last strikes we lost £14,000 but this was replaced by the money earned from the introduction of card machines), and additional costs associated with staff working from home. There may conversely however be savings in the form of events which we are no longer running. We need to think about what we consider solidarity to look like. Additionally, SU elections taking place during this time and we need students to engage. We must think about how students who may not support strike action will feel and what support they will need. We also need to think about what sabbatical officers roles are in this time.

LGBT History Month have made a calendar which can involve having no events on strike days. Womxns History Month is planning the same.

**Charli:** Are there any legal implications of being a trustee and being on strike?

**Anna:** It is not illegal or against the charity commission to be on a picket line or join a campaign. As long as your behaviour is legal that's fine. Permanent SU staff can't strike however unless they're part of a union that is on strike.

The difference between a soft and hard picket was discussed, including that a hard picket is illegal.

**Valeria:** Communication to students about what the dispute is is key. We have to inform students and not just make a decision. Facilitated learning spaces, educational activities outside of the picket line, access to school and SU spaces, and access to advice and wellbeing are needed.

**Maxine:** The strike solidarity motion was passed at a UGM as an emergency motion. There are questions around legitimacy at UGMs due to low turnout, and especially representative voter turnout for emergency motions.

**Youssra:** We need to have these conversations in more spaces than just UGMs. We also need to reflect on what happened during the last strikes as there was a lot of hurt in the community.

**Oscar:** Pickets are UCU and UNISON spaces, however the actions at the picket need to be in line with the SU Safer Spaces Policy. If arguments break out, we need a way to mediate.

**Maxine:** We are aware lots of students rely on our support services. As a charity our charitable aims are to protect students. We have to be hyper aware of supporting our members during this time.



**Decision:** Given the support of the strikes by the emergency UGM motions it was decided to delay the SU Spring Elections dates.

**Decision:** As we would lose one late licence if we were to cancel the LGBT History Month late licence, and pickets should end at 5pm, it was decided the LGBT History Month late licence will go ahead.

#### AOB

**Charli:** In the academic and welfare casework report 18/29 there claims to have been a decrease in the number of reports. This shows an error in reporting.

**ACTION** – Follow up on union harassment reporting.

[Roles and responsibilities of SU staff were displayed on the screen]

**Anna:** Recent demands from students asked for clarification over permanent staff roles and responsibilities These are provided here. As SU permanent staff are not accountable to students this is how these will be presented (as opposed to an open forum).