

DURHAM SU ASSEMBLY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 11 March 2021

Virtual Meeting, Zoom

1. OPENING OF MEETING

ST opened the meeting, welcoming members and attendees, explaining zoom etiquette, outlining that no offensive or unacceptable behaviour would be accepted and would result in being removed from the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 4 FEBRUARY 2021

There were no amendments to minutes of the last meeting.

Minutes from the last meeting were approved.

Routine business items

3. CHAIR/VICE CHAIR ELECTION

ST explained there had been no nomination for Chair of Assembly and encouraged members to nominate themselves for these positions.

ST will continue to Chair the meeting until someone is elected.

4. GOVERNANCE AND GRANTS ELECTION

ST explained that there had been no new nominations for Governance and Grants Committee and encouraged members to nominate themselves or encourage others to nominate themselves for these positions.

5. ELECTION UPDATE

The Deputy Returning Officer gave an update on the recent elections, which had gone very well and results had been declared and secured. This had been the first year of using union cloud for voting, which worked very smoothly.

A formal report will be provided at the next Assembly meeting once signed and received from the Returning Officer.

6. OFFICER UPDATES

ST had been working on a re-election campaign which has been successful and the focus now is the Culture Commission and how this can become sustainable and planning ahead to ensure this is carried forward beyond ST's presidency. This means expanding research and talking to more students, getting more ideas and input. Recently have joined the Students Against Fees campaign which is a national movement with other SU presidents and also on the panel for Vice-Chancellors recruitment.

SMc had worked with NH to secure the Safety Net Policy with the University and currently looking at the 5% rule for PGT students as this can't be used in the same way as undergraduate students. Also working on PG mental health which was discussed at the last meeting of Students Support and Wellbeing Sub-Committee. Working on creating a PG access and participation policy, as the current one the University has only relates to undergraduates and doesn't cover postgraduates.

NH had been writing a plan for Durham's access and participation plan and have been emailing student groups and associations for input and thoughts and will also be emailing JCR's for their ideas next week. Decolonising Durham work is still ongoing and faculties are still doing workshops. Information on intern roles should be available early next week, still awaiting confirmation from HR about advertising the roles on the student careers page.

ES had been working on sending a letter to Michelle Donelan, Universities Minister to ask for financial support for students that were unable to get out of housing contracts, the VC has also sent a supporting letter and had also been part of the accommodation charging review and had a meeting with the Council about the potential accreditation scheme. Currently working on recruiting active bystander facilitators, applications close tomorrow but hoping to roll this out further.

AM had been looking at third term and how the SU will support students and groups to carry out activities safely and in line with government guidelines, working alongside with common rooms on this as well. Have now joined the University Sustainability Development Goals Working Group. Democracy review is ongoing and now looking to move beyond the research phase and look at carrying out some modelling sessions, on trailing different formats of Assembly.

7. COMMITTEE UPDATES

Updates were provided from:

- JCR Presidents Committee
- MCR Presidents Committee
- Societies Committee
- Union Rep Committee
- Governance and Grants Committee
- Academic Affairs Committee

(Apologies from DUCK)

8. ASSOCIATION UPDATES

Updates were provided from:

- Students with Disabilities Association (SwDA)
- Women's Association
- LGBT+ Association
- Durham People of Colour Association (DPoCA)
- Trans Association

(Apologies from Working Class Students' Association)

****ACCESS BREAK****

Items for discussion:

9. REFERENDUM ON SU AFFILIATION WITH NUS

RP spoke for the motion and stated that two years ago, the NUS was on the verge of bankruptcy. Even without the pandemic there's been a chronic lack of capability to managing finances and they are currently in the middle of paying the price. There are millions of pounds of yearly deficits, they've sold their London HQ and they've made staff redundant and as an SU we are essentially propping this up. Being affiliation to NUS contradicts the work being done with the culture commission and the democracy review. The vast majority of students on campus don't know what the NUS is or does and it has been completely irrelevant in the last decade.

AM proposed procedural motion 8, to vote on the motion in specific parts and assembly members agree to have the discussion.

AM spoke for the proposed procedural motion and said that although it's understandable this debate is wanted but it would be beneficial to split the motion to first vote on the believes, so the principals that we want to have this discussion and look at our relationship with NUS and then vote on the resolves separately and decide if we want to have the referendum next term and whether we want to allocate the resources right now to the amount of work this would create.

There was no speech against the procedural motion.

ST moves to a vote.

The procedural motion passes and Assembly will vote on the motion in specific parts.

The believes of the motion passes.

YR spoke against the motion and stated that now would not be the time to have a referendum as this would take priority over all other work that the SU is currently working on i.e. culture commission and democracy review, which are much more urgent pieces of work that a referendum on NUS affiliation and being a part of a global union of students is a positive thing and the SU would risk becoming more isolated by disaffiliating.

AL asked for clarification if other work would have to be pushed aside to enable the referendum to take place.

GH clarified that this would be the case and a referendum being called would take priority over all other work as the law requires this to be the case.

BB stated that for liberation groups the NUS is very important. The resources that the NUS allow access to crucial. This very week the University of Leeds has attempted to scale back its transgender equality policy and only through networking and pressure from trans students has this been averted.

ST moves to a vote.

The resolve of the motion did not pass.

10. THE FUTURE OF DU BILATERAL AGREEMENTS UPON THE DISCONTINUATION OF UK PARTICIPATION IN THE ERASMUS SCHEME

RP spoke for the motion and stated that the next academic year is the final year of UK Erasmus participation and the government announced a new scheme called maturing scheme, which is intended to be a replacement on a global scale, but it is still unknown what the scheme will entail and if this will replicate what is included in the Erasmus Scheme and DU's bilateral agreements which stem from this and it could take a few years to fully understand the changes, therefore the development of a strategy is required to navigate through this time.

ST move to a vote.

The motion passes.

11. POLICY ON ANTISEMITISM AT DURHAM UNIVERSITY

MM spoke for the motion and said that there is currently no definition for anti-Semitism for the SU and the policy that is being presented today was previously adopted in June 2018 but has now expired, so the policy is being brought again with an added note to invite the SU Board of Trustees to adopt this policy as an organisational policy so that it can be a permanent policy within the SU.

ST moves to a vote.

The motion passes.