**Student Union Council Minutes 07.12.21**

Time: 16:00 – 18:30

Duration: 16:00 – 18:46

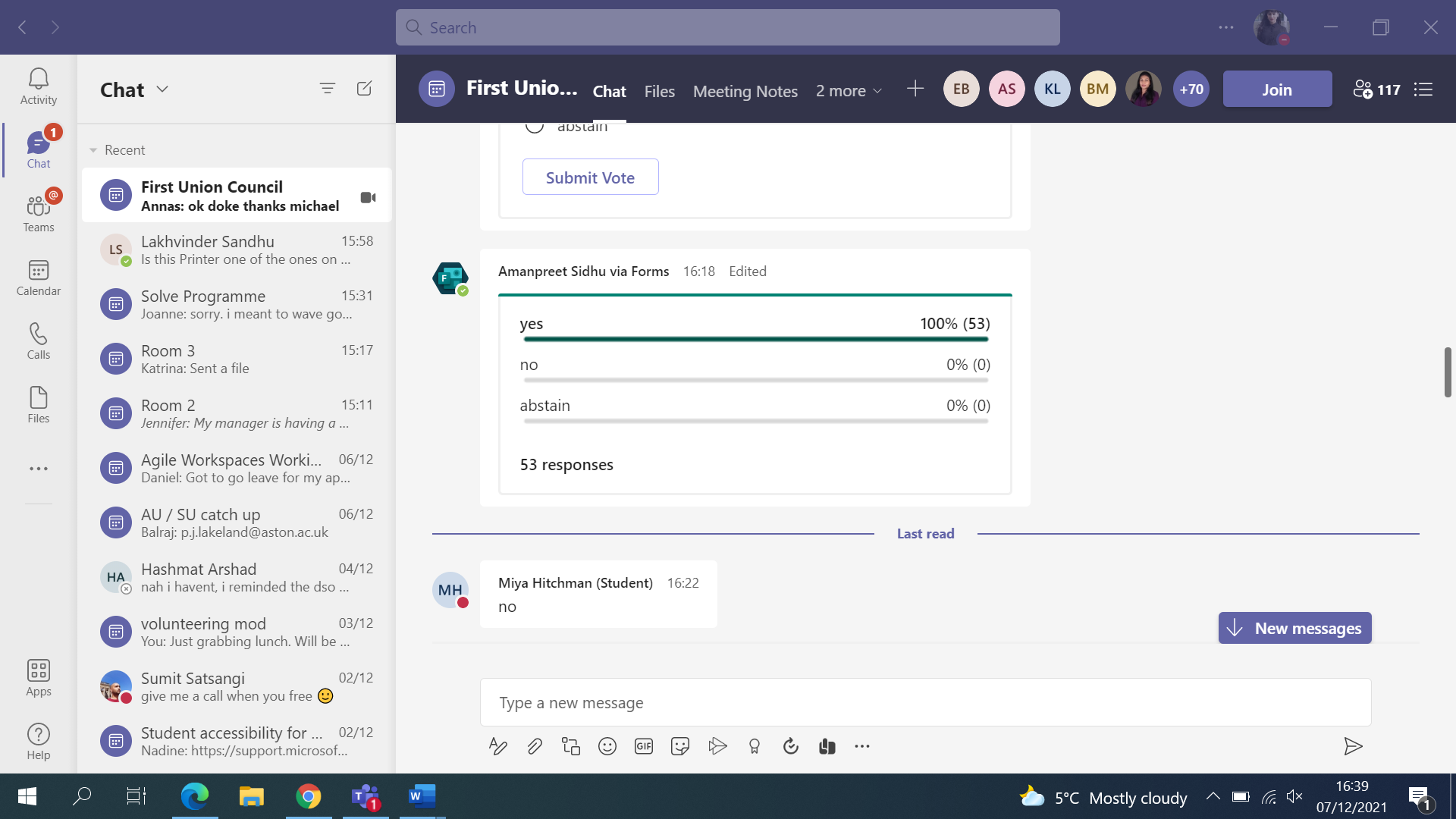
Location: Teams and G11 (in the main building)

Chair: Union Chairperson

Minutes taken by: Student Engagement Coordinator (Student Voice)

Meeting is quorate (82 attendees online and 15 in-person)

**Approval of the agenda**



**Part I**

1. **Record of attendance, and any apologies for absences**
   1. Apologies:
      1. none
   2. Absences
      1. BAME Students’ Officer – not confirmed attendance
2. **Notification of any other business** 
   1. Motion withdrawals
      1. Motion: Support for Sexual Harassment Survivors
         1. Policy has been written by Advice and Representation Centre Manager (Adrian Spence), CEO (Max McLoughlin), and Vice-President Welfare (Paige Dawson).
         2. Everything in the policy is already taking place – there is not reason to vote on the motion as it already exists in practice.
         3. Questions:
            1. None
      2. Motion: Student Spaces for Student Users
         1. For the time being there are no restrictions on student spaces in the SU therefore the motion is not valid.
3. **Notification of any conflicts of interest** 
   1. None
4. **Approval of previous Council meeting minutes (in order to ensure they are published by next meeting)** 
   1. Meeting minutes are not complete from last Council – to be posted once done.
5. **Approval of Chairperson’s Rulings** 
   1. None
6. **Matters arising** 
   1. None

**Part II**

1. **ASU Council ‘New’ Motions** 
   1. **Motion: Implementing the position of ASU Executive Secretary**
      1. Union Council Notes:
         1. There is currently no administrative member of the ASU Executive Committee.
         2. Which means administrative tasks to ensure the smooth running for ASU Council and ASU Executive Committee solely fall to one part-time officer (ASU Chairperson).
         3. Therefore, having an ASU Executive Secretary, that is a non-voting position like the ASU Chairperson, would strengthen the smooth running of ASU Council and ASU Executive Committee
      2. Union Council Believes
         1. That Aston Students’ Union should have an ASU Executive Secretary
         2. That the ASU Executive Secretary would be a student
         3. That the ASU Executive Secretary would be a part-time officer with no voting rights
         4. That the ASU Executive Secretary would be nominated, rather than elected
      3. Union Council Resolves
         1. To mandate Aston Students’ Union to open a nomination process for an ASU Executive Secretary
      4. Currently we don’t have an admin function. It will help with minutes and timing, help prepare the slides, presentation, circulation of papers/slides and help Chairperson and help better facilitate democracy.
      5. Q&A:

*Q:* *Will the secretary be allocated a budget?*

A: All part time officers have a collective budget – looking to increase but not sure.

*Q: How will you implicit or explicit biased during an election – far nonbiased nomination process*

A: Number of us will act as a panel and in an elections it is more popular based but this process will allow to understand that candidate and appoint someone with the skill set that is needed.

*Q: Has the executive consider implicit biased such as, ethnicity, etc.*

A: Have not thought about this currently as we need to get the role voted on by council first –

*Q: It would be nice to have council be part of all nominations process – i.e. the best person has the job*

A: Motion on nominations process – making sure that the implicit biased was address

*Q:* *Can this not fall under a committee that is directly linked to the Chairperson Role instead of calling this secretary a part time officer? This way we can have a contingency for people should they not be able to attend, and you then have a pool of students able to get involved with the union*

A: We are already a large team, not looking for an admin team to support the exec team – looking for one person to alleviate it – i.e. similar to Chairperson - the language is in line with the current language in the bye-laws

*Q: I'm just wondering that question based on this blended approach whether a team would be more helpful with running mics managing chat, etc.*

A: It is certainly something to consider, but at the moment the only admin person is myself – and delegating more to the exec team – potential for the future.

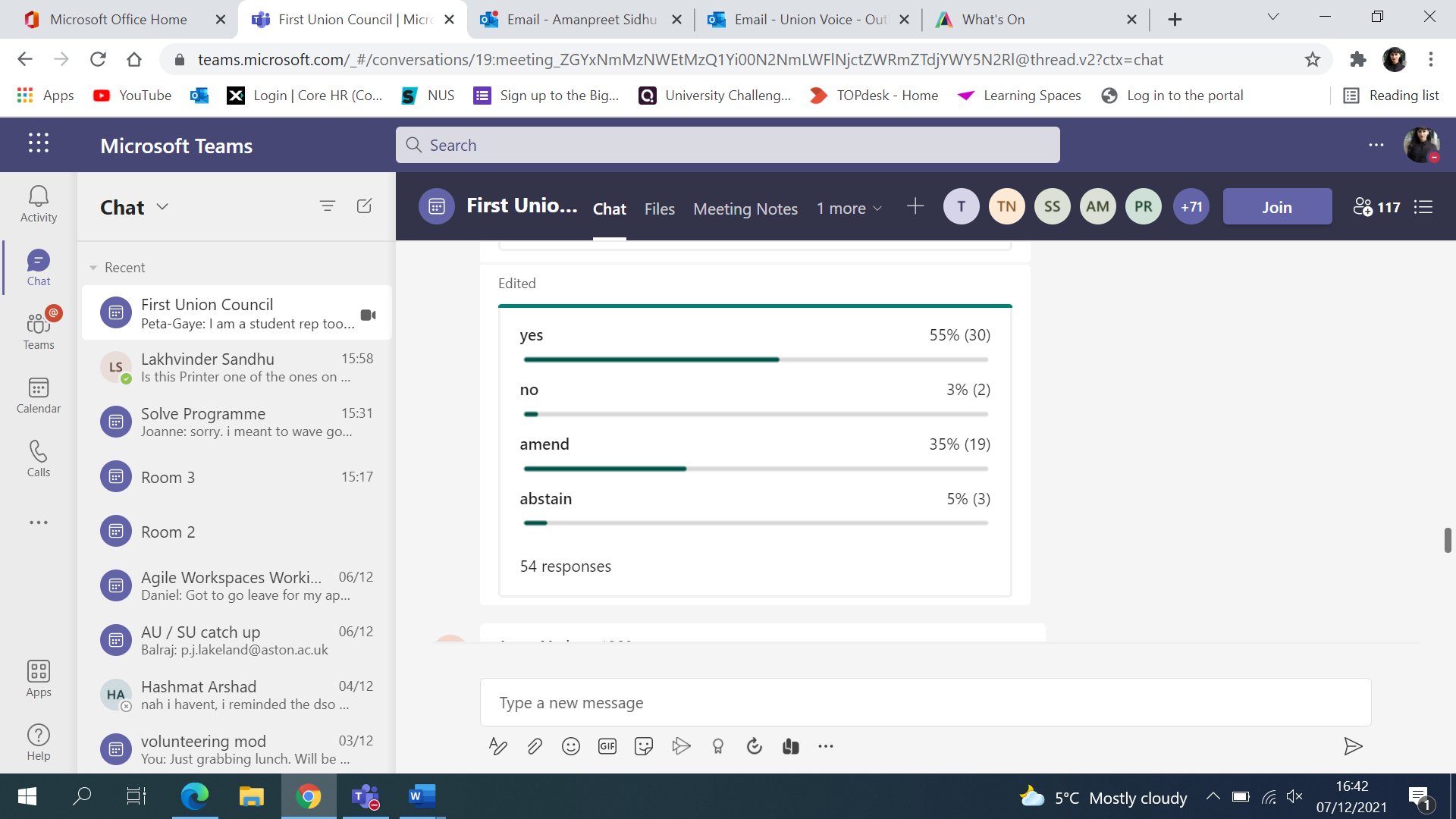
*Q: Do you have a time frame /deadline you'd like to see this position be implemented?*

A: As I tried to bring this up before, I hoped to have this done before Christmas. If this gets approved, review the nomination process and hopefully launch it over Christmas period and see it being implemented after exams – even if that means they are on for month – it will be in place for next month.

*Q: Do you see having another meeting to approve the nominations process?*

A: Yes, please vote amend in order to amend the motion and add another council to vote on the nomination process.

**Motion passed: 55%**



* 1. **Motion: Email Addresses for Aston Graduates (**Presented by Disabled Students’ Officer – Michael Pritchard).
     1. Union Council Notes
        1. Currently students lose access to their Aston email address soon after graduating.
        2. Other universities (including the University Of Birmingham) offer graduate email addresses.
        3. A format similar to [firstname.secondname@alumni.aston.ac.uk](mailto:firstname.secondname@alumni.aston.ac.uk) would allow students to stay in touch after graduation.
     2. Union Council Believes
        1. The Aston Students’ Union is there to benefit Aston students and this motion would benefit Aston students and graduates.
        2. That Aston graduate email addresses would be beneficial to students and would help graduates to stay in touch.
     3. Union Council Resolves
        1. To mandate the sabbatical officers to lobby the university to introduce this change.
        2. To mandate the sabbatical officers to advertise this to students if it is introduced.
     4. Q&A:

*Q: As a postgrad are you happy with this and would it benefit you?*

A: Yes, very much so.

*Q: Would it be possible to forward any new incoming emails from the old student address to the new alumni one, once the student graduates?*

A: something we can look into but the questions is what IT are willing to do and what they can do.

*Q: do you know if there would be a process through which you can have a preferred name for the email?*

A: Yes, something that is incorporating with IT and we should have the ability to do.

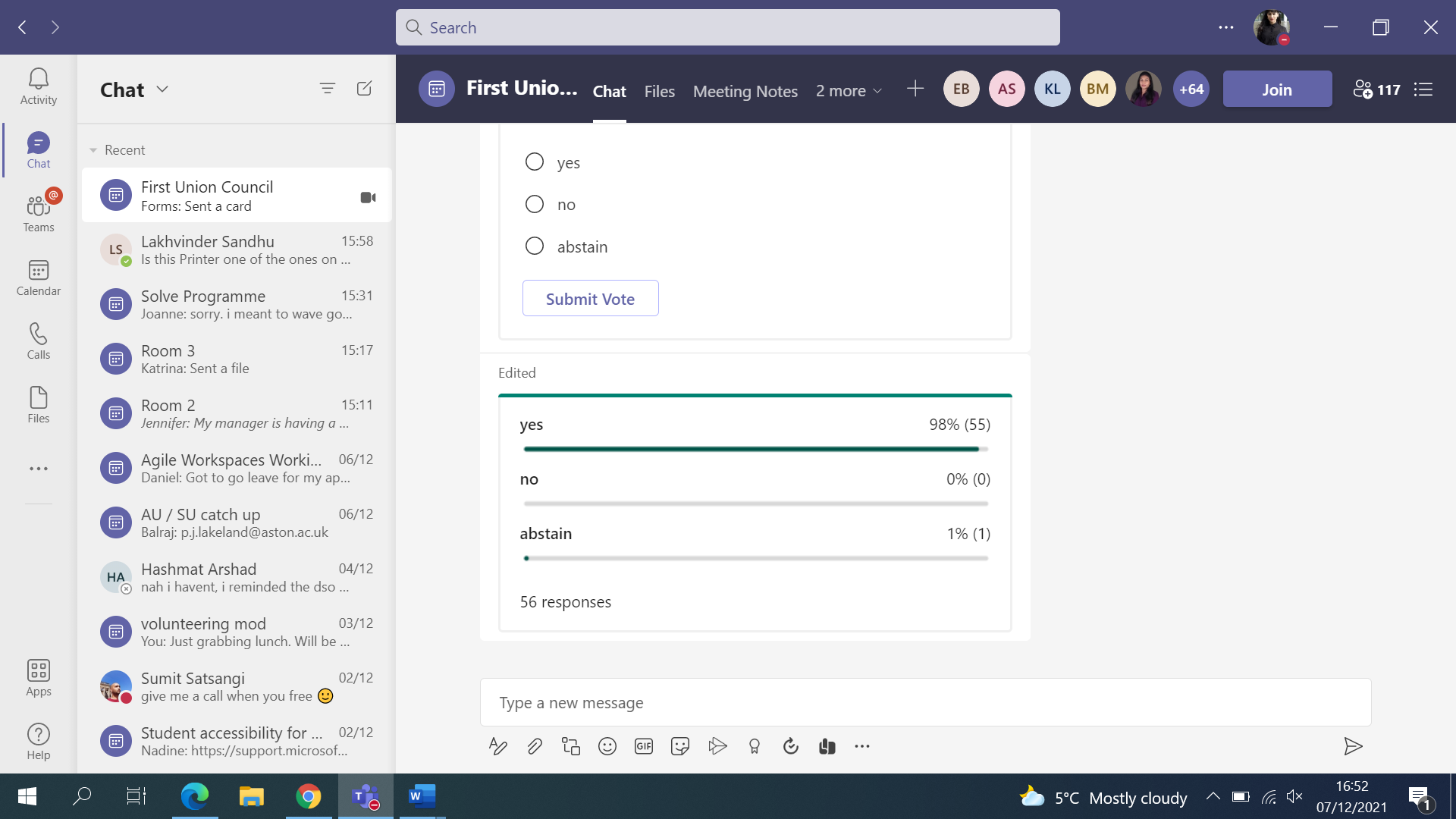
*Q: How long would this alumni email be available for after graduation*

A: These are things that will fall into the discussion with IT and we don’t have the answers to now.

Notes:

* You'd need to set up the transfer before you lose access
* You can do the transfer yourself if you wish like most emailing platforms they can do a bulk transfer to another email.

**Motion: 52% passed**



***16:50 6 students left the meeting***

1. **Amendment of Motion: In Solidarity with Disabled Students at Aston**
   * 1. Union Council Notes
        1. On December 1st 2020, Union Council resolved to declare the University as institutionally ableist, in recognition of the continued failure to fulfil its legal obligation to provide parity of experience for disabled students.
        2. The term “Ableism” is considered outdated by the disabled community and considered to be a term which does not recognise the systematic nature of the oppression faced by disabled people.
        3. “Disablism” is a term more widely accepted by the disabled community which represents the oppression of the community as a whole.
     2. Union Council Believes
        1. The Students’ Union is a forward-thinking organisation with equality as one of its core values.
        2. Consistent with this, we feel it important to use appropriate terminology and avoid outdated language where possible.
     3. Union Council Resolves
        1. To amend the previous declaration (motion UC2021.02.1a) to the following wording: “To declare that the University is institutionally Disablist”.
     4. Q&A:

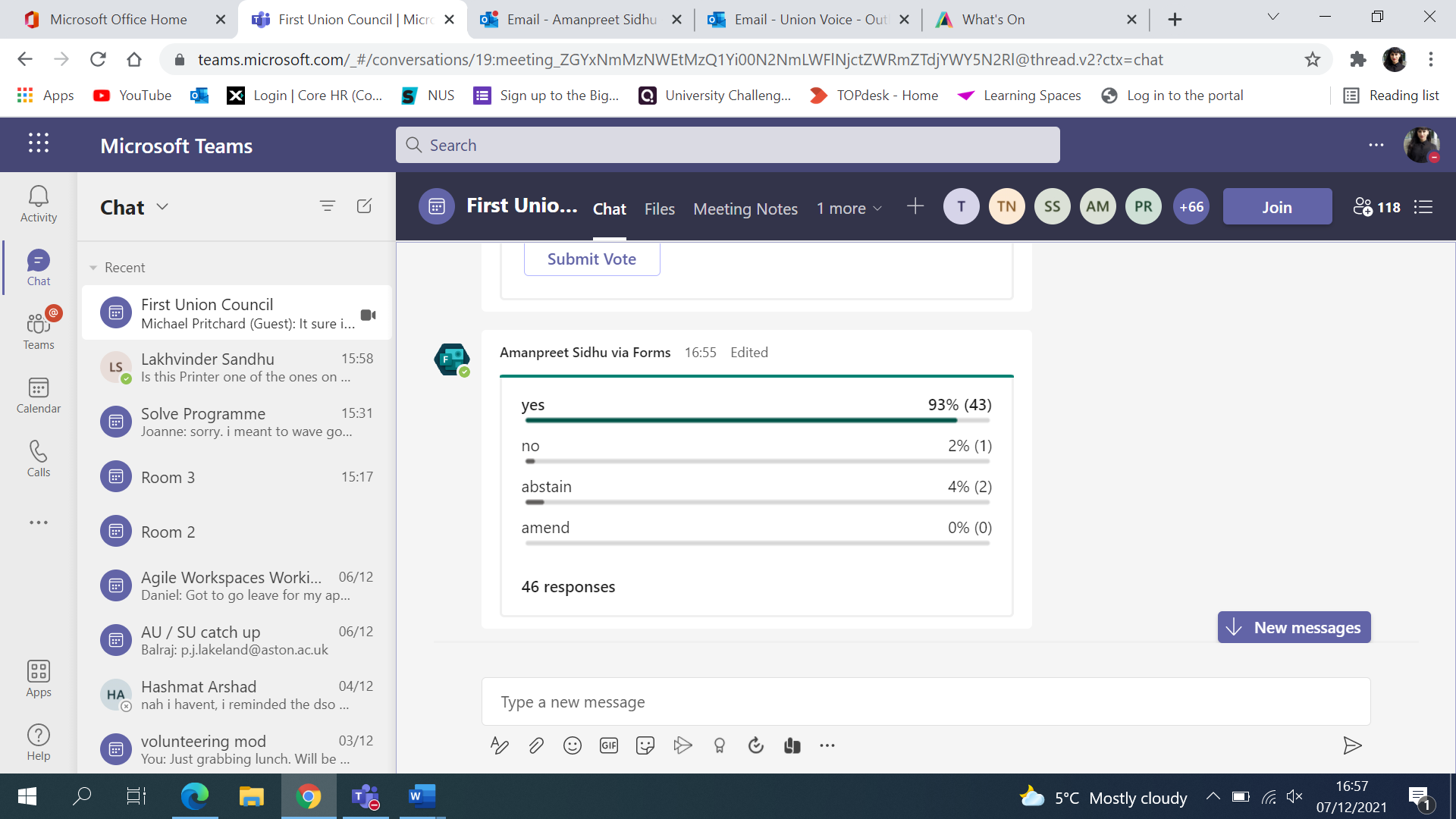
*Q: What was previously stated?*

A: The wording ableist is incorrect. Not ableist but disablist.

*Q: So, has this issue been resolved?*

A: Yes, the main building still doesn’t have motorized doors.

**Motion: passed 43%**



1. **Democracy Update: UCU Strikes** (presented by SU President – Balraj Prewal)

***16:58 one student left the meeting***

* + 1. **Executive Summary**

After an Emergency ASU Executive Committee meeting last week, the committee voted that in light of the UCU ballot asking lecturers whether they should strike or not – that the SU would ask its members (students) whether they believed the lecturers should strike. This was done via a Poll (open from 22/10/2021 – 25/10/2021) on the SU website, an email was sent out to students which included informative links for both sides of the debate. In conclusion Aston Students’ who voted (please see table below) came to the majority stance that NO their lecturers should not strike.

Nevertheless, on the 16/11/2021, 76% UCU members voted in favour of strike action vis-à-vis the pension ballot, and 70.1% voted in favour of strike action vis-à-vis pay and working conditions. The National Union of Students came out in favour of the UCU strikes.

**Table 1: Principal Information (context/data)**

****

* + 1. **Recommendations and next steps**

Since the dispatch of these papers the UCU strike should of happened. Here is a chance to share your experience etc.

* + 1. ***What are the UCU strikes?***

Lecturers campaigned for rights they feel are important for them and as an Exec Team we had a discussion – at that time we didn’t support the strike – we also sent in a poll out to students – *see above table for results*.

Regardless the strikes still happened, and we were there to support the students and assisted the strikers with use of SU facilities

Any feedback (not feedback on our action but general feelings) and/or questions?

* + 1. **Q&A:**

*Q: What is the motion? Please clarify*

A: No motion, just sharing feelings and thoughts about the strikes.

*Vice President Education Yesmeen Singh – part of a working – any concerns you can come to me and I can take it further to the working group*

*Q: What were some of the rights they were not receiving?*

A: The current conflict is that the way the University sector management across the UK, have organized to pay lecturer pensions means that the following are impacted:

* Pensions – handled by the authorities – will not be getting their full amount if it carries on as it is
* Solutions was for lectures to pay more into their pensions which means they will be taking less
* Workload (both researchers, publishers, and teachers)
* Working conditions
* Zero-hour contracts (no financial stability)
* University College Union (held a vote, some wanted to and some didn’t and got to vote on specific aspects of it as well)
* Secure jobs, reasonable hours, reasonable workload, reasonable pension arrangements, (they do not do this because they want to hurt the students – but the relationship is in the control of the employer)
* They don’t get paid while on strike

*Q: Why did the no get vote more than yes but it still gone through?*

A: more than happy to have a meeting on this – primary goal is for students have an opportunity to get more involved and have the space for you to share your thoughts.

Notes:

* Students interested in how the students can support the strikes and the uni making changes, so the lecturers are fairly compensated and we aren't missing lectures. That seems a more worthy use of the SU's time than undermining their right to pensions and compensatory pay.

1. **Trustee Board Report** 
   1. **Executive Summary**

Next full TB meeting is later in December. Alison Levey (Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Students, Director of Students & Academic Services) has been appointed as interim Trustee while Saskia Loer-Hansen is interim Vice-Chancellor following Alec Cameron’s departure.

* 1. **Finance & Risk Subcommittee - November**

Block Grant application is still(!) being considered by University – if we get the increase we’re requesting that will fund additional roles to support clubs, socs, student voice, welfare, and more.

Commercial relaunch going well so far, notably improved over pre-pandemic situation. Looking now into expanding range of menu items & forging stronger links with societies etc for “takeover” style nights.

Discussed our reserves policy – charities aren’t allowed to sit on money for the sake of it and we wouldn’t want to, yet need to have some cash for a “rainy day” - covid highlighted the importance of this!

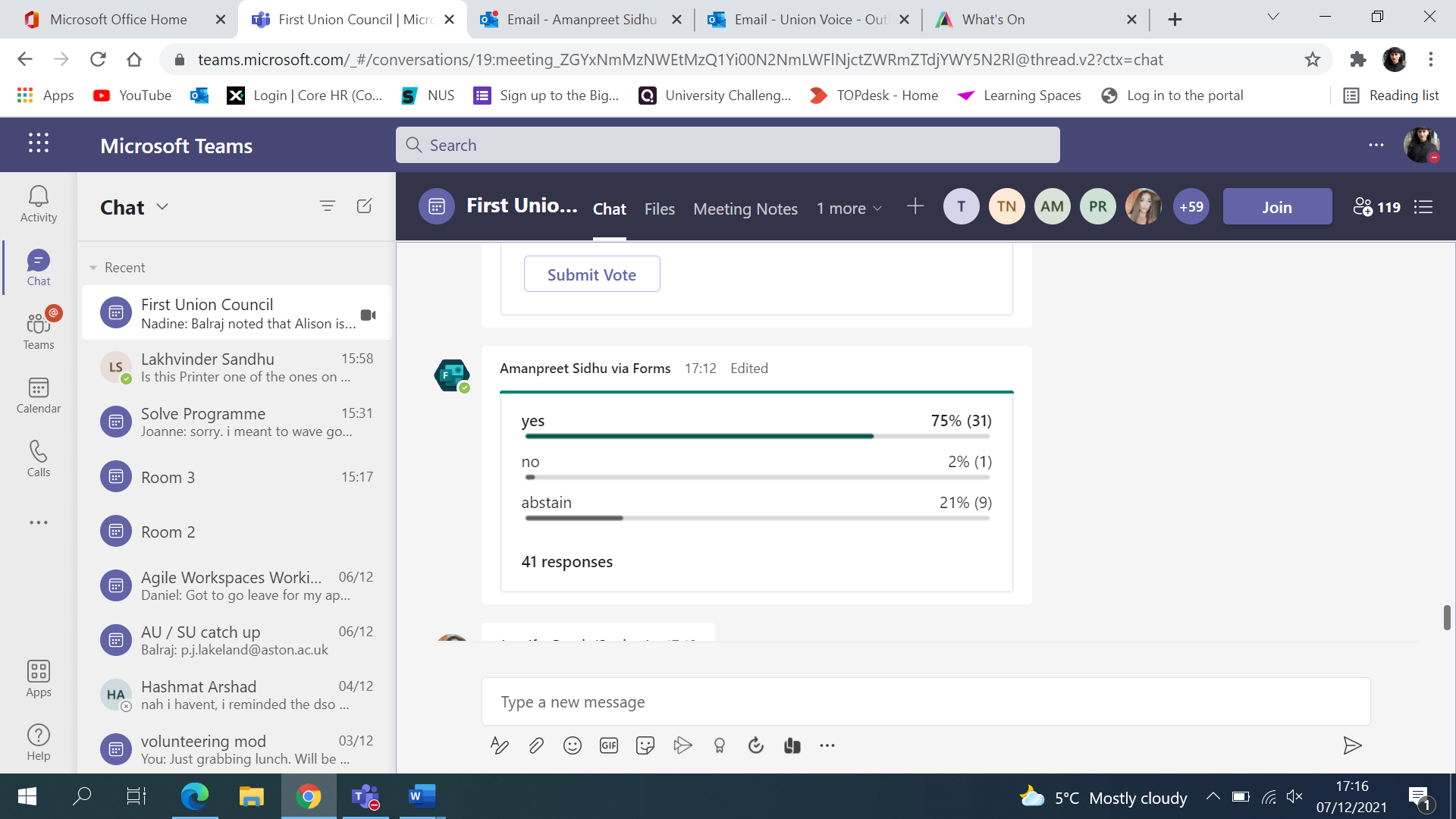
*Officers comment on the approval of Alison Levy*

Yesmeen is responding to Paddy’s question about knowing more about Alison Levey.  Yesmeen notes that Alison has been highly involved with the SU and the Sabbatical Officers support this appointment.

Balraj - Students who were struggling to get laptops – Alison pushed for this.

Balraj noted that Alison is a trusted member of the University staff

Approval of the new interim trustee from the University via Teams poll



1. **CEO Report**
   1. **Update**
      1. New Accommodation Manager starts on Monday 12th December
      2. The Vice Chancellor candidates are meeting the officer team 8th and 9th December to discuss the SU and Student Experience
      3. New Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Staff Committee
      4. National Union of Students (NUS) celebrates its centenary next year, we plan to be part of the celebration of 100yrs of student activism
      5. First draft of external Governance Review complete
      6. Possible role for the SU (building) in the April 2022 Graduation ceremonies
      7. University creating a new student experience strategy and we are central to its ideas and themes
      8. The winter break will be welcomed by the entire staff and officer team
   2. Q&A:

*Q: Mentioned that the Officer team will be having input in the recruitment, is there scope for the wider student community to have that?*

A: Officers have extended the invitation to other students (4-5 students they have selected that are a good representation of the wider student community). Last time a VC was recruited there was just the president, it has come a long way and now more students are involved.

*Q: Previous experience with University management with how it handles consultancy, it’s not often transparent, advertised, not timely – can the SU work to guarantee that the students have an impact on the decision making process?*

*Q: Is there anything the SU can do to ensure our feedback and response is listened to?*

A: Vice President Welfare – Paige Dawson - In communication with Richard Bellingham at the University is integral to this process.  Officers have requested a report to see how SU feedback/comments have been taken on board and implemented. Justification and feedback for any decision made to be provided to the SU.

1. **Full-Time Officer Feedback and Question Time**

**Vice President Education – Yesmeen Singh**

* 1. Speak Week
     1. Was extended for another week
     2. 383 students responded
     3. Goal is to write a report of the responses and take the results to the University to make sure they understand and see the report
  2. Union Senate
     1. Was successful
     2. The questions were taken and there were good answers – answers have been put in the chat.
  3. Student Voice Advocates
     1. Students have signed up and trained to take part in panels
     2. 29 sign ups in total
  4. Podcast
     1. Already posted - *Options After Expulsions* and next week - *Complaints*
  5. Q&A:

*Q: If they get pushed to being sooner – will students have enough time? Will any students have a disadvantage?*

A: This doesn’t relate to all students, only those that have had academic offenses. They weren’t getting enrolment set up on MAP and the procedure takes a long time – don’t start their year or lectures on time.

*Q: Union senate meeting – great to hear that so many students reps went – how affect was it? Was a 5-hour meeting or the reps had already collated the questions?*

A: 1.90 over 90 student reps - most of the meeting was allocated for student reps to ask questions and there was still half an hour left.

**Vice President Student Activities – Annas Mazhar**

**What have I worked on?**

1. **Student Activities Christmas Party was held with an amazing effort from SA, SA Exec and Commercial Team**
   1. Varsity Planning is underway
   2. Interviewed candidates for SU role of The Green Manager
   3. Delivered presentation on clubs, societies and VPSA role to University Executive as part of the Sabb Team
   4. AU Ball is confirmed at Eastside Rooms and tickets on sale
2. What will I be working on?
   1. Introduce Look After Your Mate training in the New Year and work with Welfare/Development on SA Exec
   2. Start planning Societies Takeover and ASU Awards for next year
   3. Start preparing documentary with Marketing and alumni student Delicious Orie to cover his journey as an Aston student to the Commonwealth Games
   4. Look at training provision for first aid and CPR for one committee member on a club or society
3. Q&A:

*Q: The delayed email replies from Student Activities has been incredibly detrimental for developing newcomer societies. We feel neglected from communication and upon one occasion, we had to wait for a little over a month for a response from SA. What will be done to improve this communication issue?*

A: Student Activities and Voice Manager - Nadine Al-Kudcy has followed up with student

**President – Balraj Purewal**

1. ‘Breaking Barriers’ with Sharena Shiv (graduate) in collaboration with the AWIB society she founded as an Aston student who is now at the University of Cambridge. A great insight for Aston students in the long term and collaborated on an event for students to attend in the union with an opportunity to be mentored.
2. Attended NUS National strategy conference to discuss with other student unions about different topics currently being faced across the sector and to see where we can keep on being as vocal as possible for the student voice.
3. Attended University Council where I had discussed the strategy and the requirements of what students want in today's current society at Aston.
4. Worked with the university alongside Callum and Preet who are very strong advocates for sustainability and discussed the student perspective on the current affairs to do with COP26.

**Vice President Welfare - Paige Dawson**

1. #brumnightin - SU Management have received an email from me dissecting the NUS Guidance on how to keep our students safe. I will be chasing this up before the end of term to check on action points (e.g., getting appropriate training for staff)
2. Welfare Questionnaire - We had 1004 responses! I have downloaded the data and aim to finish the report by the end of January. This gives us 6 months to action change!
3. Wellbeing Wednesday Podcast - 4 episodes are now live: 'Being a Woman in the Workplace', 'Transgender Day of Remembrance', 'Men's Mental Health', and 'Forced Marriage Awareness'.
4. Welfare Committee - The committee are planning to set up Safe Space during exam period for students to go and relax. They are also exploring the possibility of getting external training in for SU staff about Alcohol and Substance Abuse and having an increased presence of Umbrella Sexual Health on campus.
5. **International Buddy Scheme** - 80 Students took part in our pumpkin carving event, another 47 came to York on a day trip, and for the rest of term we have planned: Games Night, a trip to the German Market, and Christmas Dinner.
6. **Sexual Health and Wellbeing Series** - This series has amounted to 465 views. The impact being 465 students now have a better awareness of their sexual health and wellbeing.
7. **Forced Marriage Awareness** - We are mid-way through another forced marriage awareness week. We are raising awareness, but also funds for Roshni. Shaila, a representative from Roshni, was a guest on our podcast and was very informative about forced marriage and honour-based abuse.
8. **Interim Counselling Manager** - I was part of the interview panel for the Interim Counselling Manager at the University. The person they hired will be actively involved in what we do at the SU going forward.
9. **Q&A:**  
   *Q: Safety lids for drinks, out for sale and where can we get them?*

A: Available in The Lounge for use on drinks purchased and also available to purchase in the SU Shop at cost price

*Q: Are there diagrams in the University – from you –*

A: No but I will take the credit

*Q: Where can we listen to the podcast*

A: Spotify and/or Instagram

1. **Part-Time Officer Feedback and Question Time**

**Mature Student Office - Victoriano Cabiles**

* Has stepped down

**ASU Commuter Students’ Officer – Lucy Bal**l

* No updates and unable to attend
* Still contactable via officer email commuter.officer@union.aston.ac.uk

**ASU Black and Minority Ethnic Officer**

* N/A

**ASU Sustainability Officer**

**ASU International Students’ Officer**

1. Spoke to a handful of international students during the meet your officers day during freshers week and helped them with whatever query they had.
2. Joined the international buddy scheme to guide and know the general problems international students are facing
3. Networked with Paige to set up a questionnaire for international students to know their problems and help bring those problems to the union so solutions can be provided
4. Planning an event for international students this December
5. Replied some students emails and provided information they may need

**ASU Sustainability Officer**

* 1. Youth panel discussion help by … invited to be on the panel and represent Aston
  2. Taking part in uni groups – sustainable group … talked about … internal communities
  3. COP26 response – SU invited to attend our SU and talk about what each SU is doing – we had to cancel because we only had one response
  4. Litter pick and the green – due to weather
  5. 20% vegan/veggie food Wednesdays
  6. Q&A:

*Q: where is information regarding sustainability available?*

A: It is available on the SU website. Link: <https://www.astonsu.com/your_su/sustainability/>

**ASU LGBTQ+ Officer**

1. Worked with the LGBTQ+ Society and helped them with the Transgender Remembrance Day. It had a great turnout
2. Recorded a wellbeing Wednesday podcast regarding Transgender Remembrance Day
3. World Aids Day, fundraised money through having a bingo night – raise £93 pounds about 20 people attended.
4. LGBTQ+ History month – organize over Christmas

**ASU Disabled Students’ Officer**

**What else has been going on?**

1. Tour of Main Building with Estates to highlight some of the many accessibility issues with Aston campus – lack of motorised doors, lift buttons 5 feet off the ground, card-access doors not unlocking for long enough, etc
2. Networking with the Disability rep on the NUS Liberation committee (& other unis’ DSOs)
3. Raising issues including lack of Postgraduate disability support at Disability Working Group
4. Connecting with disability activists amongst Aston staff to align our campaigns and stand together in solidarity
5. We know navigating university life as a disabled student can feel isolating, but it shouldn’t have to!
6. We’re setting up a community for Aston’s disabled students which will run regular socials; offer a safe, welcoming space for disabled students to meet; provide a platform for student-led events; and empower disabled students to fight for the support we need through a Disabled Students’. If you want to join us, hit up linktr.ee/astondso
7. Q&A:

*Q: Recordings available and marketed immediately? Help students not able to attend in person to access the content*

A: Agreed, will look into this with marketing team. Potential to run the events again in Term 2, something being explored and will be communicated timely. Keep an eye out. Please email [disabledstudents.officer@union.aston.ac.uk](mailto:disabledstudents.officer@union.aston.ac.uk) if any questions, etc.

**ASU Women’s Officer**

1. One of my manifesto aims was to have self-defence classes for women; we did this with Paul, who is the jiu-jitsu instructor here at Aston, we have had our first session, and it was a great turnout. So, I am hoping for more lessons in term two, which are more co-ed.
2. Compulsory consent training – Paige has created a ‘Get Ahead’ module for the first years; this training has been given to aunties and for future SU-based training.
3. Initiate a campaign that endorses body confidence and raises more awareness on eating disorders; this will be done in Women’s month.
4. Currently, I am working with a student who had the idea of collecting sanitary products for homeless women to tackle period poverty in the UK; we are working with a charity called Trussell Trust. I will be gathering volunteers to create boxes to give. So, if you have any sanitary products like shampoo, pads, even canned food, you can donate at the SU and MB reception**.**

**ASU Raise and Give Officer**

1. Encouraged clubs/socs and raise money for Movember.
   * 1. Had a featured drink from The Lounge where £1 of the drink went to Movember.
     2. Men’s football helped to pay for ASV pitch for the charity tournament £350
     3. Had a quiz at the end of the month that raised £120
     4. £4000 pounds raised each from Men’s football and Rugy. Hockey raised £1000 (just over 10,000 altogether)!
     5. Last week – had first RAG meeting

**ASU Chairperson**

1. Keep Union Council safe by continuing meetings online – SUCCESS! We have agreed on a blended approach so students can access the meeting in person too. Since the last Union Council we have tried to iron out the issues experienced – hopefully this has been felt.
2. Held meetings to ensure that ASU Council runs more smoothly. They solutions put forward in these meetings have been approved by the ASU Executive Committee, and the ASU Staff.
3. Facilitating the ASU Officer stall for promoting the ASU Council
4. Next Steps:
   * Start working with the ASU Staff to go through the website and hopefully make it easier to access key information
5. **Fast Track Approvals**

**Executive Summary**

List of immediate items that need the members’ approval. The below committees have either gone through an election or a rigorous nomination process to fulfil each committees requirements.

**Principal Information (context/data)**

1. Approval of Disability Committee – next Council
2. Approval of Raise And Give Committee – approved
   1. **Raise and Give Committee (RAG) (table of approvasl in appendix)** 
      * List of committee members for Union Council to approve.
      * Natalie Moore – Volunteer Coordinator
      * Ruben Bladon – Treasurer & Social Media Coordinator
      * James Jefferson – Event Support
      * Meghna Manoharan – External Communications
   2. **Recommendations and next steps**
      * To ratify the aforementioned committee.
3. Approval of Student Activities Executive Committee – approved
4. Approval of Sustainability Committee – next Council
5. Approval of Welfare Committee – approved
   1. **Welfare Committee (table of approvasl in appendix)**
      * Rakshith Nadish
      * Lily Waller
      * Zayn UL-Abiden-Hamid
      * Joe Postings
      * Lauren Shipstone
      * Sasha Bunn
      * Hannah Hier
      * Gina Perry
   2. **Recommendations and next steps**
      * To ratify the aforementioned committees.
6. **AOB**

N/A