**Student Union Council Minutes 28.10.21**

When: 28th October 2021

Time: 16:30 –

Location: Teams and Upstairs Activity Hall (in the Aston Students’ Union building)

Chair: Union Chairperson

Minutes taken by: Student Engagement Coordinator (Student Voice)

Meeting is not quorate

Meeting Agenda:

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| Part | Agenda Reference | Presenter | Context |
| Opening remarks |  | Ann Bennet – Union Chairperson | **Union Council is…**   * A meeting of up to 200 members of the Students’ Union (i.e. Aston students). * There needs to be 50 attendees for the meeting to be ‘quorate’ – for the decisions made to be considered ‘official’; * The 2nd highest decision-making body within the Students’ Union, below the Board of Trustees.   **At Union Council you can:**   * Submit a motion (at least 7 days before the event); * Vote on other motions (the motion passes if more than 50% voted in favour of it) * Scrutinise your elected Officers: are they doing what they promised they would? Do you think they should be doing something differently? |
| **Part 1** |  | Ann Bennet – Union Chairperson | **Record of attendance, and any apologies for absences**  Attendance:  24 in person and 15 online – not quorate so meeting continued but all voting was indicative and not necessary to record.  Apologies:   * Lucy Ball could not attend due to lectures (notice given) * Victoriano Cabiles due to personal reasons (notice given) * Rajeshwari Buneti left early (no notice given) * Annas Mazhar left early (notice given) * Jennifer Beech arrived late (notice given)   Notification of any other business:  No  Notification of conflicts of interest:  No  And matters arising:  No |
| **Part 2** | 7. Motions | Paige Dawson (Vice-President Welfare) | Motion title: Support for Sexual Harassment Survivors  **Union Council Notes**   1. The Union recently created a sexual harassment policy which is available to access on the union website under the ARC landing page. 2. The Union has recently trained their staff via local charity RSVP to be better supporters of those experiencing/who have experienced sexual harassment. 3. The Union is undergoing a governance review which will address the code of conduct no tolerance policy on sexual harassment.   **Union Council Believes**   1. We have a no tolerance policy on sexual harassment or harassment of any kind in our union. 2. Students have the right to access appropriate care after experiencing harassment. 3. The union should have a clear action pathway for students who have experienced sexual harassment.   **Union Council Resolves**   1. To have a ‘you only have to tell it once’ policy when it comes to sexual harassment. 2. To empower the survivor to make the decisions that are best for them. 3. To fund the immediate aftercare counselling sessions via RSVP for sexual harassment cases that happen during their time at our union.   Q&A:  Q: Isn’t there a similar policy right now? Related to sexual violence.  A: About three weeks ago with respective SU staff, this policy was written. It’s brand-new.  Motion: Not passed due to meeting not being quorate |
| Part 2 | 7. Motions | Ann Bennett (ASU Chairperson) | Motion title: Implementing the position of ASU Executive Secretary  **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   **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   **Union Council Resolves**   1. To mandate Aston Students’ Union to open a nomination process for an ASU Executive Secretary   Q&A:  Q: Why can’t we change the role of the Chairperson? Why create a new role?  A: It is not possible to minute and chair Student Union Council at the same time.  Motion: Not passed due to meeting not being quorate |
| Part 2 | 7. Motions | Paige Dawson (ASU VPW) | Motion title: Student Spaces for Student Users  **Union Council Notes**   1. The Lounge is a commercial service which requires space in the union to provide its services. 2. Students’ fees contribute to the union, and their opinion on how they use the space should be considered. 3. The University and the library currently have reduced social spaces for eating, which means the union is one of the few viable places. 4. Students’ are aware that this has financial implications for the SU and understand that if this motion is passed that it will need to go to the Board of Trustees for further discussion before any action(s) can take place.   **Union Council Believes**   1. Seating by The Lounge and The Good Place should be open to any student regardless of whether they choose to eat there.   **Union Council Resolves**   1. That the SU staff of The Lounge and the Good Place should not prohibit and or discourage students from using the space if they have brought food from elsewhere.   Q&A:  Q: Is there a way we can set it up so there is a secondary space for students that aren’t purchasing something and oppose to being removed from the SU?  A: We are having conversations with the SU, so the downstairs activity hall and the upstairs one, can both be easily converted into eating spaces and socials paces by putting table and chairs out. That is a bit of a logistical issue at the moment, as we would need people to put the chairs/tables up and then take them down [but it is possible].  Motion: Not passed due to meeting not being quorate |
| Part 2 | 7. Motions | Muzafar Iqbal (Student: 170092128) | Motion title: Email Addresses for Aston Graduates  Presented by Michael Pritchard – Disabled Students’ Officer  **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.   **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.   **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.   Q&A:  Motion: Not passed due to meeting not being quorate |
| Part 2 | 8. Amendment of Motion | Michael Pritchard & Paddy Crosby (ASU DSO) | Motion title: Amendment of Motion: In Solidarity with Disabled Students at Aston  **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.   **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.   **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”.   Q&A:  Motion: Not passed due to meeting not being quorate |
| Part 3 | 9. Democracy Update: UCU Strikes | ASU Sabbatical Officers | **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 came to the majority stance that NO their lecturers should not strike.  **Principal Information (context/data)**    **Recommendations and next steps**  This information has now been passed onto the University, and we will no more once the UCU ballot has closed. |
| Part 4 | 10. Trustee Board Report | ASU Student Trustees | **Executive Summary**  Governance Review by Nick Smith Consulting is ongoing, to review our internal structures, democratic processes, bye-laws, etc. This has been on the cards for a while! Massive thanks to those of you who took part in Nick’s consultations last week.  Block Grant application (how we get our funding!) is being considered by the University, with a decision due in the next few weeks. We’ve requested an increase in our funding to be able to expand our support for clubs, societies, well-being, student voice, and more.  Saskia Loer Hansen (Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Engagement) was our University representative on the Trustee Board, but she will be taking over as Interim Vice-Chancellor when Alec Cameron leaves in December, so she will temporarily step down from the SU’s Board and another University representative will take her place until a permanent new VC is recruited. |
| Part 5 | 11. CEO Report | Max Mcloughlin (CEO) | **Update**   1. Managing the transition back into the Building, moving from online to on campus provision 2. Recruitment for new roles including Commercial Development Manager and HR, Governance and Admin 3. The new commercial offer – The Lounge/Good Place/Retail 4. Partnership with Cambridge Education Group and the Aston OnCampus initiative 5. Governance Review; from students to council to exec, to trustee board to students 6. Budgets and Block Grant – submission of a budget proposal for an increase in our core funding 7. Establishing a service to get decommissioned laptops from the University to students who need them 8. Oversight of Welcome Week and the activities to welcome students back onto campus . |
| Part 6 | 12. Progress towards manifesto | ASU Vice President Welfare | * Delivered Consent Training to approx. 250 students across clubs, societies, and auntie training. * Started the Aston Amigos initiative, which about 10% of our clubs/socs currently participate in * 300+ students have been allocated buddies and taken part in the first international buddy scheme events of 2021 * The first Welfare committee has been selected, and we have our second meeting week starting 1st Nov * The Welfare Questionnaire is LIVE and will end on the 3rd of November, we currently have 550+ responses * The Sexual Health Wellbeing series has launched, including videos on how to do an STI test (male/female genitals) and how to do a self-examination of testes/breasts. * The Wellbeing Wednesday Podcast will be launching in November (first topic: being a woman in the workplace) * £150 raised for Roshni in forced marriage awareness week * First Union anti-slavery day moment of silence for Black History Month * Co-wrote the first sexual harassment policy for the students union website * #brumnightin: facilitating club/society participation in the protest, and meeting with the campus safety working group to discuss how we can best support our students moving forward (further distribution of consent training, collaboration with local charity 0121 street huns, purchasing drink toppers) |
|  |  | ASU President | * I have been involved with the governance reviews happening within the Union to revise the bylaws of the Union to ensure we represent students effectively. * Meetings with Team and University staff to discuss the transition back to campus and current student concerns. * Discussed the PWC report with the Union Trustee Board to see where improvements need to be made going forward and will soon be liaising with the University’s Chief Operating Officer. * Integral part of recruitment for commercial, marketing and HR within the union to ensure we are hitting all areas to the highest standard. * Met with Lord Mayor of Birmingham to raise the profile of Aston and highlight what a great benefit to Birmingham the University and its students are. * Trustee board meetings with internal and external stakeholders to discuss an effective strategy going forward. * Working with disability student officers, Annas and the University to collaborate on disability history month, to further raise awareness of seen and unseen disability. * Raising awareness for disability from a personal experience to translate to students that regardless of who you are, there are adjustments that can be made to support you at Aston e.g., Enabling Team. |
|  |  | ASU Vice President Student Activities | Update:   * I have been working on setting up alumni memberships for all clubs and societies that are interested in having one, I personally believe that this is beneficial towards supporting the club or society they have been part of for 4 years and those who were final years missed out last year. * Co-ordinated the Aston Aunties teams, training and schedule for Welcome Week this year and I would like this opportunity to say thank you for all who helped us to welcome new students! * Along with Afro Caribbean Society and the Sabbs, we organised Black History Month with more emphasis on the black students lived experience. * Part of initial discussions after our partnership with Aston Villa Foundation with Student Activities to have opportunities with volunteering and charity events - further information is available if you contact me. * Live streaming for clubs in BUCS games is now able to be set up so all students can see their sports teams competing in the big games * Took some of our students to take part in some BHM filming with Aston Villa Men and Women's players to understand what the month means in 2021 * Met with all clubs during August to ensure they are supported for the year ahead * Held an incredibly successful and Covid-secure Clubs and Societies Fair with over 4000 students passing through on the day with proof of vaccination or a negative LFT * Working closely with clubs to sort socials out for Term 1 and Term 2   I am now working on:  Finalising a venue for Athletic Union Ball and analysing SA Christmas Dinner  SA Exec will have our first meeting next week  Preparing a planned documentary with a notable alumni student to inspire students in opportunities  Will be introducing Look After Your Mate training again for all committees and this will be compulsory when all confirmed  Looking into the potential of more first aid and CPR training for members in clubs or societies - recent incidents have shown why this is important |
|  |  | ASU Vice President Education | * NUS/ Lead & Change/ Koreo 365/ Sexual Assault/ Anti Terrorism/ Mental Well being/ Values Workshops * What I want to achieve this term is:   + A successful Speak Week- 15th- 19th November   + Good engagement with academic podcasts   + Constructive Union Senate- 23rd November   + International Students Workshops on basics of academics- 20th October   + Student/ Super reps engagement (WhatsApp Group chats) - 234 Super Reps- Trained   + NSS comms and promotion 15th Nov * What I want to have achieved at the end of my term in office is:   + Raise awareness on careers outside degree   + Efficient and constructive feedback from student representation   + Employability programme with University and Aston Futures   + Consistent engagement with Academic podcasts |
| Part 7 | 13. | ASU BAME Officer | N/A |
|  |  | ASU Sustainability Officer | * Attended meetings with University staff about the newly proposed campus landscape plan and sustainability across campus * Helped organise a response from SU’s across the West Midlands to COP26, scheduled after the summit at the start of November * Planning litter picks to clean up campus and the surrounding area to keep in-line with the ‘Keep Aston Tidy’ campaign and the Hedgehog Friendly Campus initiative * Currently organising the first SU Sustainability Group meeting in the near future to discuss potential projects and to get students involved in sustainability across campus |
|  |  | ASU Raise and Give Officer | **Update**  Targeted update on officer progress towards manifesto.   * First RAG event yesterday (Wednesday 27th October) – pumpkin carving at The Green, raised over £45 for Refugee Action * Movember – Grow a Moustache, Move for Movember, Football Tournament, Movember Quiz, Movember Cocktail/Mocktail – sign up on the Movember website to the Aston Uni page https://movember.com/n/astonuni?mc=1 * RAG Committee/Volunteer Group – nominations are open NOW!!! Head to the Volunteering section on the SU website (under Activities) to sign up! |
|  |  | ASU Commuter Students’ Officer | N/A |
|  |  | ASU International Students’ Officer | * Organised an international student meet and greet during freshers week to allow international students feel at home. * Spoke to a handful of international students during the meet your officers day during freshers week and helped them with whatever query they had. * Joined the international buddy scheme to guide and know the general problems international students are facing * Plan to work 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 |
|  |  | ASU Women’s Officer | * One of my aims for this year was create self defence classes for women and we’re holding the first one on Monday. Hopefully we get enough attendance, so more we can have more for the future and hoping to do co-ed classes as well. * My other aim was to create a body confidence campaign, which tackles eating disorders. I am hoping to do this in March. * My other aim to collect sanitary napkins, for homeless shelters [help with period poverty]. |
|  |  | ASU LGBTQ+ Officer | * Joined the LGBTQ+ society to understand more about what students want * I don’t have much right now, but I’m getting there and hoping to do more. * Meeting with Paige to discuss Transgender Day of Remembrance (20th of November) |
|  |  | ASU Chairperson | **Goals:**   * 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. We trialled this out our ASU Executive meeting and it went well.   **What I have been up to:**   * Working on proposals to ensure that ASU Council, ASU Executive Committee etc. run more smoothly. They have been approved by the ASU Executive Committee, and the ASU Staff. The completion of all the various comments is in process to then be presented to the Board of Trustees * Facilitating the Part-Time Officer meet-up with Nick Smith as part of the Governance Review. Nick Smith’s review has the potential to greatly change my workload – so watch this space   **Next steps:**   * Priority for the coming months will be to wrap up my proposals and hopefully be able to present them as guidance documents – if this happens it will tick of a number of my manifesto points * Start working with the ASU Staff to go through the website and hopefully make it easier to access key information |
|  |  | ASU Disabled Students’ Officer | **Goals:**   * Making campus accessible * Making it easier to get support when you need it * Building a community of disabled students * Democratising the University * Uniting liberation officers in solidarity to form an intersectionality committee * Fighting for genuine support for neurodivergent students   **Achievements:**   * Asserted the DSO’s position on the University’s Disability Working Group * Consulted with wheelchair-using students & alumni to produce an accessibility guide for getting around campus & the city centre * Organised a successful freshers’ stall and a low-sensory chill-out room for students with sensory needs to decompress from the noise of freshers’ fair * Researched & wrote up a handover report to ensure disabled students’ priorities are at the forefront of the new Head of Student Welfare’s agenda   **Ongoing:**   * Planning a comprehensive calendar of events for Disability History Month * Working with Enabling Team to improve support for neurodivergent students such as those of us with ADHD * Writing a constitution for a disabled students’ community as a core part of the SU * Much much more!   We know navigating university life as a disabled student can feel isolating, but it shouldn’t have to!  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’ Committee. We’ve drafted 90% of the group’s constitution and are keen to start meeting!  If you want to join us, the link is on our linktree. (The form is outdated, you can ignore the last question.)  linktr.ee/astondso  We also know that those of us who are Neurodivergent often have a distinct set of experiences and we can really benefit from having fellow Neurodivergent people to talk to with, so we’re also setting up a Student Neurodiversity Group!  We’re still working out the details, but if you’re interested either contact us directly or use the same form in the linktree above, and write something like “neurodiversity group” in the last question. |
| Part 8 | 14. Fast Track Approvals | ASU Chairperson | **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)   * Approval of Disability Committee * Approval of Raise And Give Committee * Approval of Student Activities Executive Committee * Approval of Sustainability Committee * Approval of Welfare Committee   Recommendations and next steps  To ratify the aforementioned committees. |
| Part 9 | 15. AOB | Flexible depending on who raises a topic | N/A |