Aston Students’ Union – Union Council Minutes

Tuesday 1st of December 2020, via Blackboard Collaborate, 4pm – 6pm

73 attendees: meeting is quorate

Approval of previous minutes – approved

Matters arising – it was explained that the Emergency Council suggested in the previous Union Council meeting did not go ahead due to scheduling issues and a lack of communication from the proposer of one of the motions.

Attendees were given the option to vote yes, no or abstain to each motion proposed in the meeting. Voting was done through the poll function on Blackboard Collaborate.

Item 1) Motions

* **Item 1.1: In solidarity with Disabled Students at Aston (UC2021.02.1a)**

Q: How has this motion changed since the previous meeting?

A: It has not changed; today’s meeting will be to propose amendments. By the time we were informed about the second motion, it was too late to make any changes to ours. We are proposing to amend parts of this motion so it complements the second motion.

*The council agreed to vote on this motion in parts/sections.*

Voting:

Union Council Notes

– Points 1 & 2: **Yes**  
– Points 3 & 4: **No**

Union Council Believes   
– Point 1: **No**

– Points 2 & 3: **Yes**

Union Council Resolves

– Point 1: **Yes**

– Points 2-7: **No**

* **Item 1.2: Disabled Students at Aston University (UC2021.02.1b)**

*Motion proposes the creation of a Disability Committee.*

Voting: Motion passed

* **Item 1.3: Introduction of a Mature Students’ Officer (UC2021.02.1c)**

*Motion proposes the creation of a Mature Students’ Officer role.*

Q: You mentioned that mature students often have childcare responsibilities – will they have enough time this role?

A: The officer role will be part-time. Students who elect themselves for this role will know the responsibilities that it requires. They will also be able to reach out to other sabbatical officers for help and support.

Voting: Motion passed

Item 2) Officer Updates

* **Item 2.1: Oral Updates from Full-Time Officers**

*The SU President, Vice President Welfare, Vice President Student Activities and Vice President Education each gave a brief update on the projects they have completed since the start of term and the projects they are currently working on.*

* **Item 2.2: Questions to Full-Time Officers**

Q: This is mainly aimed at the SU president and VP welfare – how have you measured the success of your campaigns?

A: SU president – we use student engagement as a sign of positive feedback. For example, the Black Lives Matter panel event has 1.4k views and lots of comments under the video. VP welfare – I think it depends on the nature and context of the campaign. For example, social media statistics provide digital feedback for virtual campaigns. I also have a timeline of key objectives that I use to measure my campaigns.

* **Item 2.3: Oral Updates from Part-Time Officers**

*The part-time officers were invited to update the Council on the campaigns, activities, and projects they have been and are currently working on. Updates were provided by the: Sustainability Officer, LGBTQ+ Students’ Officer, Disabled Students’ Officer, Women’s Officer, and Union Chairperson.*

Item 3) Blended/Online Learning

*Since the start of term, many courses have been delivered online. The Chairperson asked attendees to give their feedback and opinions on how students feel this has been. Below is a collection of the comments that were made:*

* It has been challenging, especially for students on international placements. Support from the university hasn’t been great, a lot of students weren’t able to go abroad.
* Staff have adapted well. However, it seems like final year students are having more assessments and deadlines this year than they would’ve done if teaching was still face-to-face.
* My course has been a mix of online and face-to-face learning. I prefer face-to-face teaching, however it would’ve been easier to have my course delivered fully online so I could’ve stayed home and saved money on rent.
* Some lecturers don’t know how to use the different functions on Blackboard. If lecturers haven’t been taught how to use Blackboard, then where is our tuition money going? This question was answered by the SU president: The university will be publishing information about how tuition money is being spent. The university have said that they are spending more money on student courses this year than they would’ve normally done in previous years.
* Not all lecturers enable closed captions for their recorded lectures, which can cause accessibility issues.
* We are getting a lot of old/re-uploaded lectures that were recorded last year.
* It is frustrating that there are no COVID-19 provisions for extensions in term time assessments, as someone could catch the virus at any time.

A poll was created, asking attendees to vote on whether they prefer online or face-to-face teaching – the results favoured face-to-face teaching.

A.O.B.:

Q: Can we have a short update from the Trustee Board in future Union Council meetings?

A: Yes, this can be done in future meetings.

Q: Can it be included/made clear in the minutes that abstain was a voting option for the motions?

A: This will be done for the minutes for this meeting and future Union Council meetings.

Next meeting date: TBC.