SU Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

# **Meeting Information**

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| **Date:** | **Thursday 28th September 2023** |
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| **Time:** | **14:00 – 16:00** |
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| **Location:** | **SU Meeting Room 3** |

# **Attendance Registry**

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| **Role**  | **Present/Apologies/****No Show** | **Name** |
| **Executive Team** |
| **SU Chairperson** | **Present** | **Jude Install** |
| **SU President** | **Present** | **Atul Rana** |
| **Vice-President Education** | **Present** | **Kwan Yuet Adora Wong** |
| **Vice-President Student Activities** | **Present** | **Juan Carlos Garcia Belza** |
| **Vice-President Welfare** | **Online** | **Kirsty Allan** |
| **Vice President Communities** | **Present** | **Taher Gadiwala** |
| **Women’s Officer** | **Present** | **Sakshi Sandeep Jain** |
| **International Students’ Officer** | **-** | **Ekta Sugahiya** |
| **Disabled Students’ Officer**  | **Present** | **Tom Foley** |
| **Part Time & Commuter Students’ Officer** | **Present** | **Batoul Abu Affar** |
| **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Officer** | **-** | **Stephen Ikem** |
| **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer + Officer** | **-** | **-** |
| **Postgraduate Officer** | **-** | **-** |
| **Mature Students’ Officer** | **-** | **-** |
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# **Minutes**

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| **Agenda Item** | **Description** | **Minutes** |
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| **1.** | **Welcome** | **Chair (JI) welcomed all officers** |
| **2.** | **Round the room introduction from all present** |  |
| **2.1** |  | **All officers introduced themselves.****RB confirmed himself as guest and here to offer help and support. Role is to only input when requested.****NA noted in attendance to make notes for the meeting.** |
| **3.** | **Terms of Reference for Executive Committee** |  |
| **3.1** |  | **RB noted change of bye laws. Previous bye laws had extensive terms of reference and last year felt lost way and wanted to reset. RB noted JI and RB wanted to ensure terms of reference were included in agenda to get input form current committee to outline a new set of terms of reference.****Decision making executive arm of SU. Campaigns and political position of SU. Voted on and ratified by Council as wider student body. Should generate policy; discuss as officers and agree. Like government and parliament.****RB stressed this meeting is the most important decision-making executive arm of the SU. Recent times the Trustee Board has taken the decision-making arm away from this committee. Highlighted this committee hasn’t been as effective in recent times and the Trustee Board has filled that gap.** |
| **4.** | **Working practice and expectations for Executive Committee** |  |
|  |  | **Chair (MP) noted that there are 4 appointments delegated to Council and that 2 of them were discussed at last Council however there weren’t enough cast votes for it to be a valid vote and therefore have rolled over. Chair (MP) noted more in-depth discussion can be found in the minutes for previous Council.****Chair (MP) noted that with any Trustee appointment, Union Council is the most significant decision-making body in the organisation and has the final say on approving these nominations.** |
| **4.3** | **4.3 – UC2023.03** | **Chair (MP) noted Saskia Loer Hansen was previously a Trustee of the Students Union and was the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Engagement. Saskia has been on the SU Board of Trustees for several years and had shown through that role and through her role as Deputy VC that she was very dedicated to putting student needs first. And for that reason, was nominated for an Honorary Life Membership.****This is a recognition of the services Saskia gave the students and the SU’s gratefulness to her.****No questions or queries were raised.** |
| **4.4** | **4.4 – UC2023.03** | **Chair (MP) noted that these appointments are new for this Council. There have been some vacancies among the Student Activities Executive Team, who oversee a lot with clubs and societies and the Chairperson is asking Council permission to co-opt a couple of members of the SU into those roles to carry out duties.** **Student Activities Executive Team Chairperson (AM) explained members have had to be removed due to non-attendance and very little engagement throughout the year. They have received 3 warning strikes and following a vote by the rest of the committee have been removed form post.****2 students have been put forward to fill these positions.*** **Harry Jagger for Media & Design; Football Chairperson and very involved with the SU.**
* **Gina Perry for Events and Fundraising; she has previous experience on Student Activities Executive Team from last year.**

**A question was asked by VPE (KW) whether the students being nominated have any disciplinaries. The staff in the room indicated not being aware of anything related to these students worth noting.** |
| **5.** | **Matters Arising from previous meeting** |  |
| **5.1** |  | **No matters arising**  |
| **6.** | **Executive Committee Plan Updates** |  |
|  |  | Chair (MP) noted that the Executive Committee have several objectives they are working towards which were approved by Council. Now is opportunity to hear from your elected Executive Committee about what work they've been doing towards those priorities and for you to judge how effective you believe they have been. |
| **6.1.** | **6.1 – UC2023.03** | **Chair (MP) noted that the President (AR) is unavailable so unable to offer an update and asked the VPE (KW) present if she could offer an update.****Accessibility plan:****VPE (KW) noted the library accessible door has been repaired. VPE (KW) also noted that the DSO (AC) attend NUS National Conference to represent Aston. VPE (KW) also noted that there are ongoing repairs to a University gender neutral toilet in the Main Building.****Cost-of-living plan:****VPE (KW) noted the University had provided £1 meals as part of their cost-of-living plan. There is an understanding that there may potentially be a different type of food being made available. ASU Pantry is ongoing and processes to measure footfall are being considered given the large uptake still. Given the increase in food being distributed the University and SU are considering replenishing stocks on Monday and Wednesday to accommodate student need.** **Democracy and accountability plan:****VPE (KW) noted Executive Committee have written an open letter to the Vice Chancellor (VC) regarding the pay related to University staff who have gone on strike. The letter noted that the importance of the funds supporting students impacted by the strikes. The letter was received by the VC and acknowledgement was made that the funds from the strike staff will be allocated to student hardship funds.****VPE (KW) noted that there is a student panel involved with appointing the new Director of Library Services as the current Director, Helen Curtis, is leaving.** **VPE (KW) noted that she has been discussing having more student space on campus; potentially on the 7th floor of the Main Building. Discussions have also included having a monitor installed in each study space which will have a traffic light system to notify students of how busy the space may be.****Supporting marginalised and under-represented demographics:****VPE (KW) noted that the Commuter Students Officer (BA--A) has spoken with Alison Levey about having lockers provided and to review the timetable to better support commuter students. It was noted that the Commuter Students’ Officer (BA-A) and RAG Officer (AM) will be raising money to help provide Iftar meals during Ramadan for commuter students who may be travelling at the time of Iftar. It was also noted that the VPW (SA) will also be raising money to provide Iftar meals to those in Syria, Yemen, Gaza, Pakistan and other countries.** **RAG Officer (AM) noted that she and SA Executive Team are running a ‘This Girl Can’ campaign as part of Women’s History Month alongside the VPW (SA) and Women’s Officer (MK) planned events.****VPE (KW) noted that she and the LGBTQ+ Officer (KA) are working on producing pronoun badges for all.****Support for International Students:****VPE (KW) noted that the SU have applied through the University’s Strategic Investment Fund for new International specific advisors for the Student Advice team.****Mental Health and Wellbeing:****SA Executive Team are discussing and organising activities that students want to address mental health and wellbeing. In the process of organising a BBQ picnic for club and society members to participate in with games and socialising.** **Chair (MP) noted the VPW (SA) continues to organise embroidery classes and other mindfulness exercises in conjunction with the Commuter Students’ Officer (BA-A). Quiet reflection time organised in the Martin Luther King Centre. Chair (MP) also noted that the VPE (KW) will be distributing Energy Bags again during the Spring Exam period, part funded by the Careers & Placement team.****No questions or queries were raised for the above.****Support for Clubs and Societies:****SA Executive Team Club Representative (AM) noted that the VPSA (AM) was unable to attend Council but is planning to run First Aid training for clubs. Also noted that Sport Aston are in the process of hiring a dedicated physiotherapist for students to access. A third point relating to a mental health campaign in sport focusing on mental health for male & non-binary sportspeople was unable to be expanded on.****A question was asked regarding the campaign focusing on male and non-binary sportspeople; what about women? Chair (MP) noted that Mental Health month doesn’t have much of a campaign around male and non-binary focus but that it wasn’t to take focus away from others. It was noted that any further discussion should be directed to the VPSA (AM) once she is back at work.****Accountability of the SU:****Chair (MP) noted officer accountability is an area of focus. Part of this is to promote the National Student Survey as a means of feedback.****No questions or queries were raised.** |
| **6.2.** | **6.2 – UC2023.03** | **Chair (MP) noted that only one of the officers is in attendance so only VPE (KW) is able to deliver an update.****VPE (KW) noted the following campaigns and initiatives she has been working:*** **Aston Expert Fair**
* **Free support videos and maps**
* **Energy Bags**
* **ASU Pantry**
* **Bring Your Own Bowl**
* **Union Senate**
* **Lunar New Year**
* **Academic Awards**
* **PGR Questionnaire**
* **Pronoun badges**
* **Aston Expert Hunt**
* **Accessible awareness video**
* **Food parcel distribution**

**No questions or queries were raised for the above.** |
| **7.** | **Reports from other bodies** |  |
| **7.1.** | **7.1 – UC2023.03** | **The CEO, Max McCloughlin (MM), provided the update in the absence of the President. CEO (MM) noted new Trustees, which need to be ratified by Union Council. Alison Levey replaces Saskia Loer Hansen as the University appointed Trustee. Also, Lee Marsham, a local Councillor for Aston Nechells. A good link to local Council and someone who is passionate about the local area.****CEO (MM) noted that discussion for the past few meetings have focused on the University Block Grant application. Confirmed we've submitted a significant bid for increased funding for the Student’s Union over the next few years to match the University's aspirations for increasing their student numbers. More information about that at the next meeting.** **CEO (MM) noted a staff engagement survey, which the SU has been running for about three years. It assesses how happy our staff are with the organisation. Really pleased and proud to say that we scored highly in that overall; our staff find the Students Union a really, really good place to work. We are hopeful the next survey brings similar results.****CEO (MM) noted the audited account was signed off for another year. A presentation of the audited accounts will be given at the AGM. T**he amount of money that we are worth has increased again and we had a relatively good year last year financially based on some underspend and some additional money the University gave us. We're in a good position financially which is important for any charity. We have a reserves policy of five months, which means that should all our funding be pulled, which it wouldn’t, but should it be we could continue to operate as we do now for an additional 5 months. This is broadly in line with the Charity Commission’s recommendations.**CEO (MM) noted the Trustee Board has also been discussing the University’s new strategy. The Board have been discussing the SU’s role within that strategy and what the SU’s role is in terms of shaping that strategy as well. Ensuring it isn’t just the good relationship between the VC and President, but that all our departments feed into the various strands that this strategy is going to have.****Save the date for Astonbury, June 9th. A big community-based event for our students and something not been done on campus for a number of years.****A question was asked by a student in the room about how Astonbury would be funded and is the SU spending any money for it. CEO (MM) noted that the University agreed to fund Astonbury and that at the moment it is not planned that the event is going to cost the SU any money.****Another question was asked about how much is going to be spent on Astonbury. CEO (MM) noted that it is currently being decided and that we are working with a company called Clearwater, who are coordinating and running the event for us. Once a final amount is confirmed, people will know.** |
| **8.** | **Motions for debate from Executive Committee** |  |
| **8.1.** |  | **No motions submitted.** |
| **9.** | **Motions for debate from other Student Members** |  |
| **9.1.** | **9.1 – UC2023.03** | **Chair (MP) noted that SA Executive Team Club Rep (AM) would have a few minutes to speak for the motion. Then opportunity for anyone who wants to speak against it following by any questions.****SA Executive Team Club Rep (AM) noted the new byelaws updated the SA Executive Team to include new roles such as Accessibility Rep and RAG Officer. The Club Reps are now separate as well as a separate Faith Society Rep and Cultural Society Rep. SA Executive Team Club Rep (AM) noted her own experience and that the SA Executive Team Chairperson (AM) was VPSA for 2 years. It was noted that the Media & Design Representative doesn’t serve a purpose given that the SU Marketing team handles both social media and design. It was noted that an additional administrative role would be more beneficial to the team, such as a secretary role.****It was noted that the RAG Officer would fulfil the fundraising role and therefore it would make more sense for the Events & Fundraising Representative to concentrate on Events only.****It was noted that for many students Faith and Culture are linked together so having a Representative where they come together would accommodate that overlap.** **It was noted that the Team and Individual Sport Representatives would make it unbalanced for Clubs that would be split between the respective Representatives. It was felt it worked well this year to have just the 2 Representatives who split the clubs between them by mutual understanding.****The Motion proposes the following amendments:*** **Create an Executive Secretary who is a non-voting member**
* **Change ‘Events & Fundraising’ to ‘Events’ Representative**
* **Return to ‘Club’ Representatives**
* **Return to ‘Faith & Culture’ Representatives**

**Chair (MP) noted there were no students wishing to speak against the Motion.****A question was asked regarding should the Motion be voted through as to whether it would impact the SA Executive Team election for this academic year. Chair (MP) noted that the Trustee Board would need to ratify any change to the byelaws, but this could be potentially done outside of the usual Trustee Board meeting schedule. Depending on when the SA Executive Team election takes place there is no reason why this couldn’t be in place in time.** |
| **10.** | **Guest Speakers not related to the Motions debate** |  |
| **10.1.** |  | **No Guest Speakers** |
| **11.** | **Other Business Approved by the Chair** |  |
| **11.1.** |  | **No Other Business Submitted** |
| **12.** | **Business that has arisen since the 7-day deadline for items and deemed to be an emergency by the Chair** |  |
| **12.1.** |  | **No Emergency Business Submitted at the time of writing** |

# **Decisions and Actions**

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| **Item** | **Decision/Action** | **Lead** | **Due Date** | **Status** |
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| **1.** |  |  |  |  |
| **1.1.** |  |  |  |  |
| **2.** |  |  |  |  |
| **2.1.** |  |  |  |  |

# **Date of Minutes Approval**

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| --- | --- |
| **Date:** |  |
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| **Time:** |  |
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