

Agenda:

- Introduction
- Q&A for the Full-Time Officer Team
- Academic Satisfaction
- Break
- Ideas Board
- SCOs Campaigns
- AOB

Introduction

- Welcome from Louis

FTO Updates and Q&A for the Full-Time Officer Team

Sharan

- Went to Leeds with Jessie for RGSU Residential. Three priorities: finance and funding, intl students, divestment, social justice and climate action.
- Teaching awards shifting to be more student focussed
- Working with research and insight team on researching PGR careers support and disability support
- PG Yoga, and PG Pints events. Looking at adding new activities, and making the current events a bit more interactive. Thinking of making the PG Yoga a regular event
- Intl student karaoke event
- Education committee, updated on our priorities. Agenda item on PGT dissertations, looking at changing the structure to allow for more practical options such as placements. If this were to happen, it opens the possibility for PGT winter graduations to be sooner, and before international student visas expire.
- Mumbai Enterprise Campus opening September, looking at supporting the student experience there
- Q: is PG pints tomorrow?
- A: Yes!

Lucy

- Hawthorns cheap meal hatch has opened, back by popular demand!

- Rent setting. This work is going well, looking at making big savings for students.
- Find a Flatmate event was very well attended and students connected with each other.
- Q: when would students start hearing more about the cheap/free food initiatives and loyalty schemes?
- A: ASAP. Want to reward students and make sure those who need it most can access it.
- Q: timeline and eligibility for SU in-house guarantor scheme?
- A: This will be dependent on trustee board cycle. Renters Rights act will remove option to pay rent up front, which means more people may need guarantors. This has meant that the SU is open to looking at this again. It's a big project and much research to get done before this can happen, so unsure the timeline on it at the moment.
- Q: how can students get involved in campaigning/raising awareness around gambling?
- A: email the liberation and campaigns team.
- Q: How sustainable is the hawthorns hatch scheme – are you expecting it to run long term?
- A: Not very, unfortunately. It's something that the SU has provided, but it's dependent on who the officers are and the financial support from the university. Hopefully with more pressure and publicity of the desire and need for this option, this will increase the willingness of the university to keep running these schemes. It's something that will likely always be a lobbying effort from officers.
- Q: option to eat in catered accommodations – last year it used to be about £220 per month to eat there, now £300 per month. Are they earning profit from the food in the catered accommodation?
- A: The values of the organisation change dependent on the financial situation. Previously these type of services (catering) have been operated even at a cost, but this had changed – they have decided they can't run catering if it isn't profitable. As an SU we disagree that students should be facing these costs, but there's not much to be done on this.
- Q: do you know how many students pay for catering in accommodation? It's a big increase.
- A: It's not many students who have catered accommodation, relatively.

Katie

- Society forums (academic, campaigns and identity have happened so far). These are being run in a new way to allow delving into the specifics. Using a society ambassadors system for representation in this space, to allow for better

communication between the UA officer and societies. Also creates space to ask questions and improve transparency.

- Working with the uni about activity space – spaces are difficult to access.
- Q: how are soc ambassadors selected, and how will fairness in representation be ensured?
- A: Long term they'll be chosen by committees who attend society forums. Keen to make sure that they are representative and diverse, rather than determined by who has the biggest societies. At the moment as we're just trialling this, ambassadors have volunteered.
- Q: what role do these forums/ambassadors have in SU?
- A: more a case of feeding things back which will inform change, and helping to make these changes. Will also look to embed this further later on.
- Q: what outcomes from uni estates manifesto?
- A: this manifesto seems to be more a range of hopes rather than concrete plans. I'm therefore focussing more on building relationships to improve access to the existing spaces on campus.
- Lucy added: the last estates strategy wasn't fully executed, and the previous person in charge of this was sacked, so they're taking it very seriously to get it right.
- Q: timeline for improvements to campus space booking system?
- A: Looking at better signposting of the existing available spaces this year. Long term, not sure – everything is very slow with the uni on this front.
- Q: what do you think a joint SU/uni booking system would look like?
- A: not sure if this will be something that the SU/Uni are both keen on, but there could be much better information and signposting on the available spaces. Would like there to be one comprehensive platform for room bookings. Feedback on the SU booking system is that it's okay, with a few potential improvements.
- Q: there weren't enough study spaces in the last teaching block, I'm wondering how we can expand study spaces? Especially for students wanting to do group work.
- A: in TB1 worked on opening up spaces for study in different buildings. You should be able to use any teaching space that isn't in use – this can be good for group work.
- Suggestion that information about study spaces could go into officer updates or elsewhere that it will be broadcast to students.

Linlu

- Working with campus division on accessibility. Making videos to share accessibility information. This will be updated in May.

- Working with SVLOs on Sexual Violence Awareness week 2-6 Feb. On the 3rd in person workshop gathering student feedback, looking to provide some in-house consent training.
- ASSL bookable study spaces – study pods which are ideal for neurodivergent students.

Jessie

- Discussed Arms Company idea at last SRA, have made a lot of progress on this. Met with relevant staff, next step is having convo with dev team about meeting with the impacted societies to have productive meetings. Also meeting with marketing to get the wording right on comms
- A year ago we passed the motion on anti-Palestinian racism definition, continuing to work on the actions related to this
- Working on sanctuary scholar scheme – looking to fundraise for this scheme. Lots of students are experiencing a study ban and being forced to return to their home countries, so the scheme is looking to raise funds to support legal process for supporting these students
- At the RGSU met with Alex Sobel MP – lobbying and seeking guidance from him. Bristol is leading at voter registration among students.
- Working on international student levy. Working on the consultation to the government on this.
- Trying to bring student voice to conversations around MEC
- Secured funding for research project around experience of Chinese students in engineering.
- Working on supporting Palestinian students.
- Shreya organising house meeting on 3rd Feb.
- Q: international student levy – what steps have been taken, how can students support?
- A: letter writing campaign. Important for us to understand the political climate: this could have been so much worse. Have had success with lobbying from it being a percentage to a flat fee. Have had commitment from the VC that this levy will not be directly transferred to the payments made by international students. This work can't be separated from general activism around international students – their involvement. Why voter registration is so important
- Q: Outcomes of lobbying Alex Sobel, and how do you plan to hold MPs accountable?
- A: Really hard to hold MPs accountable. You can attend MP 'surgery' to talk to your MP and hold them accountable. Staying educated on the work of MPs is important.
- Q: how will the research on Chinese international students lead to support?

- A: we currently have a blind spot. Research informing the international students success plan.
- Q: how will student rep and safeguarding work for MEC?
- A: unsure on safeguarding. Re student rep: the campus will be associated with IITB who have their own system for student representation. There will be a school rep who fits into the Bristol rep system, but keen for them to have their own system.

Ella's updates linked on the agenda. You can email any questions.

Academic Satisfaction

Mia giving updates

- Feedback engagement fellow project going really well. Have checked in with these and they're working well with school education directors. Working to implement quick fixes in the medical school. In humanities fortnightly check ins, screen recorded feedback. In CMM looking at introducing feedback reflection in personal tutoring. Updated on this project at Uni Edu Comm yesterday, and they were really pleased with the progress of the scheme. Support from this team on securing funding for this project to run long term and remain embedded.
- Marking and moderation transparency video is done. It will be released in time for 3rd of Feb, when provisional unit marks become available.
- Joint honours motion, took to student academic representation network yesterday. Lots of support on this, from both students and staff, so looking forward to progress on this. Sharing of best practice. Work on this motion ongoing.
- Finally received info on release of timetables: have now been sent a comprehensive overview of how these are determined. This should give more transparency. We'd still like timetables to be released earlier and to be better tailored to student experiences. Have been invited to a workshop so hopefully will see some progress on this.
- Education Committee – someone brought a paper on a uni approach to AI. Conversations around this started a year ago, but still there hasn't been consistent guidance on this. Academic integrity also important wrt this. The paper was asking whether/what work should be done on this. Still gathering student opinions on AI. If anyone has thoughts they'd like fed back, please get in touch.
- Comment: important to distinguish between taught and research degrees re AI guidance – across taught courses there's much more consistent guidance. Instead of splitting student/staff, splitting it taught/research.
 - Sharan: will be good to bring that distinction forward more strongly

- Q: Web Data Collection must be released institution wide as a single batch – why? If they're waiting for all data before they can timetable, it holds up the work on timetables.
- A: Mia will ask in the workshop.
- Q: about joint honours student representation.
- A: we've had examples when communication has worked well between schools for joint honours students. With personal tutoring across two schools – this would be too complicated to put in place. But there are examples when someone has another contact at their second school, even if not a personal tutor there.
 - There are good examples in some schools, but this definitely isn't the case across the board.
 - Planning an agenda making session, but happy to also look at gathering wider feedback

Honorarium

- Comment: people who received payment in December had been taxed on it – has this happened to all SCOs and FReps?
 - The tax wasn't mentioned, because I'd put it as additional to another part time job it was taxed, but if I don't earn over the threshold can reclaim it as a rebate.
 - Concerns re visa requirements seeing as it's been counted as a taxed salary. Unsure how this works without timesheets.
- Chiara clarified that it wasn't stated that the honorarium would be tax free.
 - Reps: We weren't aware that this information would be going to HMRC.
- Tax would be dependent on what option you picked on the form, so some people have been taxed and some haven't.
- The issue is being looked into – the lack of response has been because it is being looked at by SU staff rather than because it's been missed.

Break

Further Qs on Ac Experience

- Q: AI – PhD Students I spoke to felt that the university's policy focussed on discouraging all AI usage, rather than discussing how it can be useful. The university should share its policy in a way that isn't so discouraging. I've read that some universities have made the paid version of chatgpt accessible to students, as a useful tool. Copilot isn't as good. While there's so much

conversation about AI, why not train people to use AI. Eg PhD students could use it in research. Study skills support could include this. Feel that the judgemental tone towards AI is not helpful.

- Comment: on the website for the events for PGRs they are doing some training on AI.
- Response: this training was a basic intro, rather than detailed training.
- A: Mia: Director of Innovation and Skills is working on developing training modules on AI, but I will follow up on this.
- A: Sharan: need to think about where this training would sit. AI will now be a standing item on UEC, so we will be revisiting it frequently.
- Louis: these opinions are things that will get debated among students, eg we have motions coming to council arguing against the use of AI.
- Mia: yes this opinion is divided among students, but I'll definitely feed these thoughts back.
- Comment: some programmes are releasing AI pro versions for free, so maybe we can make this widely known rather than paying for new pro versions.
- Sharan: workshops on inclusive assessments in time of AI, we heard about a Hong Kong university sharing lots of information about different AI programmes.
- Comment: important to emphasise that copilot stays within Bristol, so you can use it for confidential data – this is vital to make sure that people know this. Whereas external AI systems will not protect this. Students are not widely told about this unless they specifically go searching for this information.
- Q: re timetables – what safeguarding exists if schools miss the deadline for Web Data Collection.
- A: Mia will feed back.
- Q: which students are most affected by unavoidable option clashes?
- A: Mia will also ask this.
- Q: Mentions of staff early view of timetables – could we get a student early view, with indications of confidence level of how likely it is to stay as set? If staff get to view far advance, but students only right before term starts.
- A: Again, will feed this back.
- Q: Timetables: why the time gap between staff and students getting timetables?
- Q: unclear the trade off between room utilisation and student experience?
- A: do you mean, how do they decide room usage versus having rooms available for students?
- Yogadveep to email the list of questions to Mia to take to the workshop.

Ideas Board

- There's not an up or down vote option on the comments on the ideas board.
- Could raise more awareness of the ideas board, and make it more obvious to students where it is. Particularly in university spaces.
 - You can access ideas board page from the SU website. The reason for this is so that students get the explanation for the page before you submit an idea.
 - Worry that students will go straight to the ideas board rather than talk to their course rep first.
- Students aren't notified about new ideas being added or changed, so would be good to find out without having to go back and check all the time.
- Lucy: we could speak about adding it to the UoB app. We could also look at putting it up on the screens around campus.
- Could set up better filters so that the ideas are easier to search through.
 - Chiara: do you mean ideas that have already been selected?
 - Yogadveep: yeah, so that it's easier to sort through them.
- Jessie: at Leeds they had lots of physical promotion in student spaces about how to get involved, ie through posters and displays.

SCOs Campaigns

Shreya

- Hosting a house meeting on 3 Feb on activism on campus, 4-5:30 in 5.20. Two speakers, one from Palestine activism, one on environmental activism. Want to hear about students' experiences of activism, and see how the SU can better support student activism. Good to openly address heated political dynamics.
 - Louis: at student councils, people can express ideas in a loaded tone, which makes people defensive. Will there be discussion on how to communicate ideas well?
 - Shreya: one discussion on wider university experience, and one on S experience. But we could also focus on how to express ideas.
 - Louis: it's about how to get people on side – to allow for expression and agreement rather than shutting each other down.
 - Shreya: yeah really good to discuss nuance of debate
 - Comment: about respectful communication during disagreement and conflict?
 - Louis: yes, and about trying to find common ground. Rather than polarising.
 - Talking about campaigns: will use the house meeting to inform how we move forward with other campaigns, such as the letter writing campaign.

Wendy

- Working on accessibility campaign with Sian. Putting up posters around campus to promote this, particularly in areas with accessibility issues.
- Talking with Elisha about how to get funds to move forward with this campaign.
- Sian writing an article on new disabled tenants sessions

Charlie

- Main focus this term on a house meeting for LGBTQ+ students. Have been working with the other organisers, but want to pin down a more specific aim before running a house meeting

Question for SCOs:

- There's a foundation in the US who raise awareness around healthy relationships, would like to put something into place here. Workshops and education around this. Can the SCOs help with this?
 - The SCOs are a new scheme, but would definitely be interested in supporting this.
 - Could it also link with Sexual Violence Awareness week.
 - Email Lucy with info about this foundation. It's called One Love.
- The foundation works to train students to deliver workshops in universities to raise awareness around issues such as domestic abuse.
- Linlu: come along to the workshop on Feb 3 and share this info and feed back these ideas.
- Shreya: how would you see this best structured?
 - The ultimate aim would be for this to be embedded into the university's programming and could happen every year.
- Charlie: Aimee (SCO) would likely be very interested in this! Email the SCO mailbox with this.
- Chiara: email it to me and I'll disseminate it.
- Jessie: also worth looking into the campaign to make misogyny a hate crime.

Email any questions to SCOs.

AOB

- Elections: last year there were 6 faculty reps?
 - There will still be 6 this year – the faculty titles will represent the new system, but there will be 2 for each faculty. This is the same at PG and UG.

- This does mean that two people from one part of the faculty could represent both parts.
- Students from one part of the faculty will still be hearing feedback from across the schools.
- Comment: this problem already exists at school level, so not super impactful.
- Comment: I feel like this has more impact at UG level
- Liv: this problem exists anyway with 6 faculties.
- Comment: getting feedback from school and course reps is really hard, so you have to use your own experience as well.
- Comment: feedback from course reps is so difficult. Something we've found helpful is setting up a mailbox, so that we can gather feedback centrally. With regards to lacking shared experience, I'm still able to raise their concerns without sharing the experience.
- Comment: it's valid to have people representing across faculties – you always have to represent a variety of experiences anyway. As long as school reps are represented by the FReps, it's okay.
- Comment: in this new structure, it will be more important to use the school rep role and ensure that they are giving feedback from course reps and working as the intermediary.
- Comment: important to remember that for PGRs the system is different.