

SRA Agenda and Minutes – 23 January 2025

Attendees: Gurvin Chopra (PGE), Katie Poyner (UAO), Lucy Pears (SLO), Louis Anscombe (Chair of Student Council), Tash Jenks (SU AcRep), Tash Lowles (SU Wellbeing), Chiara Campolo (SU Democracy), Yogadhveep Arora (UG Engineering), Jojo Vyvyan-Jones (Life Sci UG), Junayd Malick (DSC), Jordan (UG Sci), Khushi Khetan (SSL PGT), Bhavni Joshi (UG Arts), Yuqi Cao (PG Life Sciences), Wendy Sun (DSC)

Apologies: Yi Zong, Dan Smith, Mia Stevens (UGE), Dave Ingerslev, Sam Appleyard-Sanderson, Ella Lovibond (SSD), Linlu Ye (ELA), Natasha Smith, Sude Capoglu, Bakhtawar Javed (ISO), Meghna Vellakkal

Chair: Louis Anscombe – Chair of Student Council

Minutes: Marisa Clements

Minutes

Updates

Written officer updates included at the end, with additional updates/discussion included within the minutes

Katie

- Opening seminar rooms as extra study space – contact if you're finding them closed
- Working on motions from student council
- Society forums to support committee members
- Music Rooms

Q: Society Forums – will these count towards accreditation criteria?

- Yes it will count towards attending democratic events

Lucy

- New housing advice team! Brought student perspective to interviews
- Guarantors work – working with uni to improve their offering. Meeting with REnt Guarantor which is better than Housing Hands.
 - o Working with housing and lettings teams to look at guarantor schemes through the SU.
 - o Working with Bak on lobbying government re guarantors on the renters reform bill.

- Win to prevent paying rent up front, but likely means more landlords asking for guarantors.
- Met with BAME net chair to involve their input
- Buses:
 - Looking at getting an exam bus to Coombe Dingle
- Setting up hustings for the WECA Mayor, everyone come along in March!

Q: how will students submit questions?

A: candidates will have 5 questions they can pre-prepare for, and then we'll use slido for live questions.

Q: Uni relationship with First buses?

A: No update on this. Met with campus division – haven't got far with this. Trying to ensure I'm included in these conversations with First, but this hasn't happened so far – uni not been involving them in this.

Point: Bus ticket cost gone up again! To £2.60.

Point: (Lucy) Going to Severn Beach price will go up without the train ticket cap next year. This is something to pressure mayoral candidates on at the hustings.

Lucy: look into TravelWest Bristol for potentially cheaper buses.

Gurvin: look into Train Pal for cheaper trains!

Bak's Updates

- International student survey ongoing – all Russell Group student unions participating. If we get more than 200 responses at Bristol we can use that data specifically to work on issues that are important to Bristol international students

Gurvin Updates

- Borrow a Blazer launching in February, about 35 blazers in a range of sizes. We've also secured funding for a hand steamer
- Expansion of bristol masters scholarship for sciences
- Working with Mia on the part-time work fair, to make transition to university feel easier. Hoping to launch for October 2025.

Q: what kind of roles?

A: jobs to do alongside your studies - and providing more info on these

Q: is there any plans to find more rooms for interviews? The careers provision isn't enough at busy times of year.

A: We can look into this, although careers doesn't have a huge amount of space.

Linlu's updates

- Uni is keen for feedback on the updated wellbeing support service. The changes have been to take away the form to access the service, and hopefully to keep waitlists down. Currently seems to be well received and waitlists seem to be lower
- Sexual Health And Guidance (SHAG) week happening in March/April
- Secured more money for the Gender Expression Fund

Campaigns & Democracy Update

- Liberation and Campaigns team supporting Union Affairs Officer on advocating for increased student maintenance loans on a national level. Lobbying the chancellor.
- FTOs attending APPG for students on renters rights bill
- Work through NUS has resulted in change to renters rights bill, to prevent landlords taking more than 1 month of rent in advance

Motions

- Article on Forced Swim Test went out with the officer updates, and it's had a lot of traction. Officers going on tour of the animal testing facility. It was really nice collaborating with VegSoc.
- Working on the borders motion, supporting student action for refugees. Social media promotion of events, and working with the committee to get Evelyn to sign a letter, looking at severing ties with the border industry.
- Fossil fuel free careers motion. Working with enterprise team to prevent partnership with BP. This doesn't prevent students from accessing opportunities, just means that the SU won't promote this.
- As a trustee of the SU, making sure our ethical guidelines are up to date
- Circuit Laundry – worked with a student on this. Met with financial advice officer, to look at an alternative to free laundry. Lucy pointed that financial hardship funding application is not appropriate for laundry at the moment. Looking at promoting this better to students. Looking into funding to support this project. Students have to spend even more because they have to tumble dry laundry in halls.
 - o In her meeting with the financial advice officer, Lucy found that there was a possibility that some funding for laundry costs could come from the Access and Participation Plan, but that this would need to be supplemented by other funds to allow students who aren't covered by the APP (such as international students) to access
- Support Bristol Student Housing Cooperative. Looking at improved access to lower cost housing, rather than being pushed into high end high cost housing.
- Reminder to SRA that there is a link on the agenda to the active policy table.
- Chiara: remember that you can bring ideas for things you want the officers to work on to this space.

- o Lucy: the uni are engaging with us more than we expected, despite obstacles that we have faced.
- o Gurvin: we are in committee spaces where we can keep bringing up these issues again and again.
- Sensory rooms: one opening in Richmond Building – we've got around the issue of installing a uCard reader to allow the room to be opened this month – by using the scanner on the corridor outside the sensory room.
 - o Q: uCard readers – are the SU ones for attendance the same as the ones on doors, and the same cost?
 - o A: these are different, and not expensive/ongoing cost.
- Important not to get disheartened when pushing the uni on things that take a while to come into action - with continued pressure you can achieve results.
- Q: where can we see the progress being made on active motions?
- A: Lucy: you can double click on the motions on the website, where you can see the updates on what the officers are doing to work on them.
- Repeating the update (from previous meeting) on where the milk from the vet school dairy farm goes

Break

Academic Satisfaction Updates

Gurvin

- Structure of the year – prep week. This year it was poorly planned and executed – lots of the things students were meant to receive, they didn't. Many students didn't come back to uni for it as there was no impetus. Looking for any feedback on this.
 - o Student reps fed back some reflections:
 - o There was a large gap in expectations – school staff still organised labs and deadlines during this week, which clashed with the way the week was promoted by the university. Messaging was unclear on whether students needed to come back for this week.
 - o Poor advertising
 - o Some students came back and buses weren't on
 - o Students on the English and Theatre course were told by the department to come back, but then there wasn't anything on
 - o Preparation material wasn't released until very late in the week, because the school staff didn't know what was expected
- Gurvin: yes, it sounds like there was very little communication from uni to schools

Yogadhveep fed back about the response to the forum he held:

- When there's a coursework deadline and exams close to each other, both are negatively impacted. Likewise with back to back exams. Workload in TB1 difficult for applying to internships, which has been addressed a little with push to coursework over exams. A lot about not having enough info about exams, and resources about what was expected

- On his course they received a mock, that wasn't representative of the exam. This was less resource than in the previous year.
- Lots of students enjoyed having the longer winter break, and especially some international students for whom it meant they could go home
- There were exam results that on average were lower, so scaling has been used.

Khushi attended school of business fsslc, lots of students raised issues about accreditation. The uni doesn't do these across all areas, and it can disadvantage job prospects

- This is an issue in engineering as well. But using accreditation can have other impacts – eg on exceptional circumstances, or with discrepancies with university marking. The uni needs to be clearer about whether degrees are accredited or unaccredited.
- Gurvin: I will chase this up - (Khushi's course is Human Resource Management). Was there anything that made people think it was accredited?
- Gurvin: is there a financial difference for accredited courses?
- Khushi: I'm not sure. Some unis have the course accredited – I chose Bristol based on reputation, but might've chosen Birmingham based on the fact that their course was accredited.

Junayd raised the issue of transparency on exam dates. Courses are supposed to refer to blackboard with the list of dates. But there have been problems with this communication.

- Gurvin: I think this might be a faculty issue, but I can talk to Mia
- Tash J: Raise with the course rep to take to SSLC
- Student Council: feedback was that people wanted to say things, but felt very scared to speak up. Were worried about being cancelled.
- Chiara: we had problems with Slido which meant submitting questions was difficult.
- Louis: We are working on AMM and student council for future to try and improve the accessibility of speaking up on the motions. AMM will already be different, and then based on how this goes, we will try something different again for Student Council 2.
 - For enquiries on democratic meetings, email Louis, Chiara, Katie, Democracy inbox
 - Chiara: it's easier for us to follow up if you put things in an email
- Q: what's the fact checking on motions before they come to council?
- Louis: in the motions themselves, if someone says something – I can't stop someone from talking if they are making untrue statements. The motions are checked how they're written by DSC, but we can't control what people say in the meeting.
- Chiara: the SU and DSC do fact checking, but it's not comprehensive – part of the debate is for students to call out inaccuracies.
- Louis: if someone says something that you think is wrong, we want it to be criticised at the meeting. But it's our responsibility as the people running the meeting to make sure people are able and comfortable to speak up

AOB

AMM – 4th February

All students can attend and vote (not just student reps), it's held at G42 Powell Lecture Theatre, Physics building

This will be a fully in person meeting, where voting will be done with voting cards.

Q: does this remove the anonymity of voting?

A: The reasoning is to remove the issues that using digital services like slido have created

Response: this makes sense at student council, where voting should be transparent as voters represent student cohorts, but doesn't make sense AMM where voting should be anonymous.

Chiara: deadline for hybrid option by 31st January.

- Historically we've not had anonymous voting, it was only due to holding hybrid meetings.
- Slido can cause significant problems if it goes wrong at a really big meeting
- There is historical precedent at political union meetings of voting not being anonymous

Louis: feedback from last meeting was that the digital issues were a big problem, so we are trying this out to address this

Elections

Nomination Dates: 9am 3rd February – 5pm 20th February

Candidate academy sessions are on the website, to give support to anyone who wants to run and learn about running a campaign. Many of them are online and in person.

Think about whether you want to rerun – if you can't or don't want to please encourage someone else who you think would be good to run. Remember that you could run for a different role if you'd like to try something new. Lecture shout outs could be a good way to promote this.

Q: How will Faculty Reps get paid next year? How will this work, particularly with reps who do different amounts of work?

A: Likely to be a stipend rather than an hourly rate. The role will be the same, but with financial support.

The point is to encourage people to get involved. It's okay if you can't give everything to the role.

Q: Will there be a difference between pay for PG and UG roles? These roles have different responsibility due to the number of people attending forums etc etc. UG faculties usually involve more work.

We obviously still want people to do the roles because they want to represent students, but the stipends are intended to be a reward to students for their work. At the moment pay will be the same, but your feedback is useful to take into account.

END OF MEETING

Written officer updates:

Katie Poyner - Union Affairs Officer

1. What I've been working on:

- I've worked with Campus Division to open empty seminar rooms for you to use as study space! This will hopefully help with how busy campus gets during exam season—and it'll continue for the rest of the academic year. Let me know if you face any issues as we shouldn't have to struggle for space on our campus!
- I've been working with Bristol medical societies to inform the Russell Group SU's report on the NHS 10-Year Consultation. We are talking about introducing paid placements, ensuring accommodation quality, etc. I'm making sure Bristol voices are heard!
- I'm also working on motions passed at Student Council! One project, alongside Lucy, is tackling the Forced Swim Test to push for meaningful change. We have sent an email out to students completing action 1 of the motion. Lucy and I have also arranged a visit to the testing facility this week as well.
- Currently, working on creating Society Forums. So that committee members can come and informally chat to me about issues on running a society, and how we can move forward to make progress.
- Ongoing work with our Student Opportunities and Service Manager on improving on the music facilities rooms. Got 2 new(er) pianos and adjustable stools but this is a continuing process + lots more work to be done!

Linlu Ye - Equality Liberation and Access Officer

1. What I've been working on:

- I have been working on the motion 'Introduction of an anti-Palestinian racism definition to Bristol'. I have had a meeting with the motion proposers and EDI group from the university. The next step is to seek advice on the definition from the EDI group and submit the definition to a boarder university committee to seek approval.
- I've also been working on supporting mature students regarding on community building, wellbeing support and car parking. I have been in touch with a mature student and a university staff and is writing a paper to highlight the barriers that the mature students are facing.
- Ongoing working with Campus Division on providing free period products and distribution of period pads donation.
- I am also working with the student living officer Lucy and Wellbeing coordinator Tash on preparing SHAG week regarding harm reduction, consent training and healthy relationships campaign in March.

2. A recent win:

- A recent win for me is I have worked with the university on conducting a trial of free period products! Products will be openly available in the bathrooms for you to help yourselves. The following bathrooms are:
 - o Senate House - LGF & 4th floor
 - o Beacon House - LGF rear of study centre
 - o Wills Memorial Building - main w/cs by entrance
 - o Richmond Building - Balloon Bar
 - o ASSL - Ground floor
- Another win is I have secured funding for the second round of Gender expression fund. We are in the process of relaunching the application in February.

Bakhtawar Javed - International Students Officer

1. What I've been working on:

- I have been working with the Russell Group Students Union to launch a research project to collect evidence on International Students' Experience so that we could lobby for them nationally.
- I recently attended the Russell Group Residential in Belfast where I contributed to next steps in lobbying for international students at national level and in the Parliament.
- I am working with the University on seamless planning for arrivals and transitions of international students in 2025.
- I am working with the University and the Student Living Officer on finding better options for Guarantors for students. As part of this, I have been attending the Webinar series of Unite Foundation on Guarantors.
- I have been collaborating with the accommodation team at the University to ensure that the information they provide on accommodation to international students is accurate and easy for students to comprehend.

Ella Lovibond – Sports & Student Development Officer

1. What I've been working on:

- I have been working hard planning the second annual Derby Day 2025, which will be taking place on Wednesday 26th March. It is going to be even bigger and better this year with more teams and sports taking part in the biggest sporting event of the year at the university!
- I have also been working on the SU Football World Cup, which is taking place on Saturday 15th February. It will be a great event with lots of international students getting involved and representing their countries!
- I have been working closely with Sport, Exercise and Health on an upcoming B;Active ParaSport Takeover week, from the 17-23rd March. Aimed at disabled students, open to everyone, these free social parasport sessions offer a discovery of adaptive sports and a celebration of inclusion - let's raise awareness of barriers in disability sport!

2. A recent win:

- A big win for me is the launch of our brand-new Injury Support Group next week (w/c 27th Jan)! At the beginning of the year, I worked hard to secure £15k of funding to set this up from scratch. I have been working closely with Sport, Exercise and Health and I am really pleased that it is now ready to launch! The Injury Support Group is all about creating a community where students can support each other throughout their recoveries, and it is open to any student, regardless of your level of sport. There will be weekly workshops around the Sport Psychology behind injuries, helping athletes with their return to sport, as well as weekly coffee and catch ups where students can check in with each other. We understand that everyone's recoveries will look different, that's why we are here to support you!

Lucy Pears - Student Living Officer

1. What I've been working on:

- I've been working on establishing the SU housing advice service! I was on the interview panel to make sure that the candidate we were hiring would be suitable for the needs of the students. I have also been collating all the signposting links and advice and support that I share with students so that the housing advisors have a good pool of resources to use.
- I've been having meetings with SU Lettings, the university finance team and a company called 'Rent Guarantor' to try to set up a Guarantor service for our students that isn't difficult or expensive. These meetings have been going well and I'm glad to be working on a way for students to access housing with help from the SU.
- I've been developing my relationship with the student accommodation service and the student accommodation manager Thomas Shepard. This has allowed me to feedback what students have been telling me about the conditions of their halls. I'm glad that I can escalate problems to the Uni and put pressure on their services to deliver the best result for students.
- I

2. Recent Wins:

Mia Stevens - UG Education Officer

1. What I've been working on:

- I recently gave a presentation to a university committee asking for better access to marking criteria for students. This includes the releasing of past papers and model answers (with clear links to criteria), dedicated time in seminars to ask questions about marking criteria and assessment briefs, and opportunities for co-creation exercises with students. The board endorsed all these actions and distributed them to the Heads of Schools. Soon I'll be taking these actions to the School Education Director Networks to get their commitment to implementing these actions in each of their schools.

2. A recent win:

- A big win for me is the introduction of a more timely release of assessment feedback. Working with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Oversight Board, I presented to the board a series of asks from students around assessment feedback, especially the time in which it takes to receive it, and the board endorsed this and issued it as an action to Heads of Schools. As such, students should now expect a timelier return of their feedback!

Gurvin Chopra - PG Education Officer

1. What I've been working on:

- Mia and I have two new projects/ campaigns we have begun work on. The first being a 'Part Time Work Fair,' we hope to launch this next October. The purpose of this fair is to highlight part time work opportunities to students. Work opportunities is something that a lot of international PG students mentioned they were looking for when they first arrived at university.
- The second project Mia and I are working on is a 'Know your students are working over 15 hrs.' This campaign aims to inform staff members of the realities of student balancing studies and part-time work. As well as this we are aiming to make student-facing pamphlets that highlight how to present the skills students are gaining in their part time work in their CV's for future careers.
- Working with the RGSU to advocate for APP for PG students.
- Working with PGR staff members to create a massive end of year celebration event for our PGR students.

2. A recent win:

- The launch of the 'Borrow a Blazer' scheme in collaboration with the careers service. This scheme allows students to borrow a blazer for interviews, vacation schemes and anything else they might need professional wear for. This scheme feeds into our officer priority of tackling student poverty.
- Expansion of the Bristol Masters Scholarship (exact amount is still confidential)
- Successful PG events – Bath Christmas Market, Left-Handed Giant tour, Movie Nights, Game nights.
- Relaunch of the Gender expression fund.