

Student Council and Forum Minutes 16 April 2026

Item	Owner	Timing
Welcome	Chair - LA	5 min (17:05)
Intro to Student Council & Forum	Chair	10 min (17:15)
FTO Updates	Full-Time Officers	30 min (17:45)
Motions		
“Rent Review” – Epigram’s “Break the Mould” Campaign	Motion Proposer, Chair	15 min (18:00)
BREAK – 10 mins (18:10)		
Forum		
Discussion within tables	Forum	20 min (18:30)
Swapping tables	Chair	5 min (18:35)
Discussion within tables	Forum	20 min (18:55)
AOB	Chair	5 min (19:00)
END / PIZZA		
GUILLOTINE – hard stop in case the meeting overruns. Nothing further will be discussed after this point. We will still aim to finish the meeting by 19:00.	19:30	

Welcome from chair and information about the format of the meeting.

DSC is available for any questions or process suggestions.

Officer Updates

Katie - Union Affairs Officer

- Society Ambassador Forum will continue next year, to have more representation for students. Still a pilot to see how this can work best.
- Two new activity spaces in Richmond Building will be opened next year for outside of teaching hours, with an array of facilities.

- More study space for TB2 assessment period. There's a 'Find a Teaching Space' option on the Find a Space tool, where you can find empty teaching spaces to use for study.

Mia - Undergraduate Education Officer

- Exam study lock-in days, to secure study seats in SU Living Rooms on [dates] with food, study skills etc.
- Working with commuter students working group to ensure that support from the university is targeted and effective.
- Secured funding to continue feedback fellow project next year, to pay these fellows to
- Working with university to simplify their marking criteria and make it more easily accessible.
- Improving how students can access assessment mitigations
- Working on improving access to timetables

Linlu – Equality, Liberation and Access Officer

- Presented at EDI Committee meeting with Sian (Student Community Organiser) about accessibility.
- Setting up fund for disabled students to buy small pieces of useful equipment.
- Working with a student to get the university to hold 'Quiet Graduations' to allow students to access graduations if they have additional sensory needs.

Lucy – Student Living Officer

- The website has been updated to show that laundry costs are not included. But we are trialling laundry included in two accommodations.
- Senate House on the 28 April to talk about what the renters' rights act means for students.
- Tripled the amount of microwaves available from the SU – Hawthorns, Loft, Langford. Plus swap shop at Langford.

Other officers' updates are in the pack available online.

Questions for officers

An attendee asked some questions regarding the SU's byelaws and procedures. The officer team explained that more information about this is available on the website and through talking to the co-chairs of the trustee board. They added that the SU will review its democratic structures next year, and that this will be a good space to feed in these kinds of questions.

Some attendees asked for more information on the new microwaves discussed in the Student Living Officer's update. She outlined the locations of these (SU Loft on the ground floor of Senate House, in the Hawthorns Building, and on the Langford Campus). There are microwaves already planned for the new Temple Quarter campus. She can feed back the desire to see microwaves in university controlled spaces such as the ASSL, but as this is not an SU space, we can't ultimately make the decision on this.

An attendee asked about the systems for updating students and inputting feedback. The Student Living Officer explained that ensuring web pages are updated will be a priority over the next few weeks.

Motion: 'Rent Review' - Epigram's 'Break the Mould' Campaign

Proposer speech: working on this project for over two years for Epigram. Student housing in Bristol is extremely poor, with the vast majority of students having mould in their accommodation. 700+ signatures on a petition in support. Rent is extremely expensive. The motion seeks to continue the support of a student led campaign to improve the situation in student housing. The motion looks to begin the creation of a Bristol specific landlord review database – so that prospective tenants can see the feedback that landlords have received from previous student tenants. Also looking to create a landlord accreditation scheme.

No speech against

Questions

Students asked questions about how the accreditation scheme would work and the potential knock on effects of this. The motion proposer explained that it would be a voluntary opt-in scheme for landlords to advertise that they take student welfare seriously. The Student Living Officer added that she doesn't foresee landlords charging a premium once accredited, as these kinds of protections follow policy that will soon be coming in under the Renters Rights act anyway.

A student asked about what SU support the Break the Mould campaign has already received, and what additional support will it gain if this motion passes. The proposer explained that the Student Living Officer endorsed the campaign and raised its profile in university spaces. If the motion passes it would become SU policy to continue to support the campaign – it will remain a student-led initiative, but can benefit from the backing and resources of the SU.

No speeches against the motion.

Vote: motion unanimously passed.

10 minute break.

Went to small group discussions (noted below).

Any Other Business

- Black Europeans Event Social Diplomacy Summit on 7th May at Bristol City Hall – a policy research group looking to highlight racial inequalities post-Brexit. Will be pitching to EU Diplomats. Want to involve more people with relevant lived experiences. Would encourage any interested students to come along.

Forum

Renting/Student Living

The Student Living Officer asked the students around the table to share what issues they think are important or could be areas to make change in terms of Student Living.

- Two months notice issue: in a 10 bed student flat, if one person wants to leave they can't terminate the contract; have to either agree for everyone to leave, or find someone to replace them.
 - Would be good for students to make sure students know this before they sign contracts
 - Could we also coordinate to match up students who want to leave a tenancy with those who want to find a new place to live
 - Lucy: This is something we've worked on with students doing years abroad in the past, although tricky due to students not wanting to share info.
 - The agreement with the previous provider of this type of service has ended (directory of people looking to move/find flatmates etc) so something that we could hopefully take on in the SU.

- Next SLO will be working on renters rights in the aftermath of the government policy.
- Section 21 No Fault Evictions are coming to an end, but there is a rebranded version of this for students only. This means that landlords will likely still enforce a 12 month contract using this power.
- Currently swapping in and out costs around £50 and you have the onus of finding a new tenant – would be good to share this information so people are aware
- A lot of the reason people end up living with people they don't like is the October-December rush to find housing. Students racing against each other creates the pressure.
 - The SU could also share info that housing searching comes in waves – it's not necessarily the case that you MUST have housing secured by December.
 - In York, SU accredited landlords are held off from releasing housing so that it's staggered through the year
 - Bristol SU Lettings have been trying to push more towards accommodation being released in waves.
- First year university accommodation
 - Metalworks with mould problems, reported the issue where the bathroom extractor fan didn't work, it took 2.5 months for someone to come and sort it
 - Another student waited this amount of time too
 - First year accommodation should be scrutinised as much as private
 - Private contracted halls – there's not enough clarity on the uni website about their relationship to private accommodation providers. Students should have the full info, and understand when the uni is the landlord, and when it's external.
 - Information about the different uni landlord/contract structures.
 - Different structures mean that different complaints systems exist which don't talk to each other.
 - Idea to have more information on the website which allows students to know where they need to complain about issues.
 - Looking at the SU creating a guide on how to effectively complain about accommodation issues
 - When there was flooding at Metalworks, people complained to Fresh (contractor), saw no support, went to the SU and the Uni as well – unsure where to go.
- Private landlord lives next door to us and shows up unannounced and goes through our trash – we tried to talk to the council about this but they did nothing

- Report to the 'Rogue Landlord Team' on the council website, and Shelter Helpline can be useful.
- Storage over the summer – would be good to get more info about this
- What to do if you don't have anyone to live with, but can't get into halls

Round Two – short break for the groups to swap tables

- Student social life – where to go after society activities finish to continue building relationships. Thinking about what is an option other than going the pub? Social spaces for chit-chat after an event? What spaces exist for this without needing to drink and/or spend money?
 - SU living rooms!
 - Often it's with flatmates, so then we go back to the flat together
 - The living rooms are so needed, that they're always super busy! Which means it's hard for a big group, although emptier later in the evening.
 - Maybe the SU needs to ask societies who don't drink (eg Islamic Society) how they address this issue.
 - There are some cafes that are open late
 - Libraries, although these aren't open late.
 - Philosophy building had a kind security guy who allowed us to use the space – sometimes it's worth asking to use spaces
 - Going to the park in the summer
 - It's difficult when so many of the spaces are in a private/commercial sphere, so it's hard for the SU to compete
 - But officers have pushed to have the Beckford to be kept open later
 - Concerns around Temple Quarter, hoping that this will be open later and provide more space
- Source Cafe in Senate House for expensive food, SU Hatch in Hawthorns for basic food that's affordable
 - Source Cafe food is really nice but it means it's way too expensive, would almost be better if it was more basic but affordable
 - Wondering what the uni's stance on this is?
 - Lucy discussing the basis of Source. Source defines itself as 'not-for-profit' because they're the catering arm of the uni. The uni was spending lots of money subsidising Source, so they've pushed Source to make a profit. They'll never move the Hatch model into Source because it undermines profits.
 - Students feel that they should be catering for the majority, not just the ones who can afford the premium options in Source

- Lucy explaining that they might look to put cheaper food options in at TQ.
- Is there a way students can put pressure on this issue?
- Uni head of Catering could be contacted with student feedback.
- Come up against the issue that SU work on Cost of Living can sometimes compete with Source which makes it hard to get changes made

Assessments

What things can we make changes on?

There are things that Mia can take forward, along with things that reps can take into their local school or faculty setting

Having criteria which students can understand and which they can see being applied in the marking

Suggestion

Grade boundary simplification idea from an academic: taking the sub boundaries out and having “pass, fail, 2:2,2:1, 1”

Reps not happy with that idea

Staff and students can't discern the difference between 83% and 85% so maybe the simplification to degree classifications might be clearer

How would degree classifications work - we wouldn't know if it was a high or low 1st.

When doing A levels, we would be able to see how strongly within the grading we are and see if we could therefore get to the next grade to. Having the idea of how close you are to the next grade is critical.

Mia will push back on the idea

Plan to simplify the long text descriptors: students want to see examples of what good critical thinking is for example

Having descriptors are useful for describing what you are developing for your CV – the wording is really useful for students for this

They also appreciate the clarity, particularly if your marking is relatively subjective depending on your discipline

Examples of good practice

Jo-Jo: we can link the feedback comments with what the feedback means. They also had a session with the lecturer about what the essay should look like and were able to give feedback on how that would work for them. Then linking this to the criteria – students could give feedback on how the essay could be built which would cover the criteria.

Formative assessments: they tend to be group work – students can work on something new together. There is a formative element followed by the summative follow up assessment.

Lecturer spent time in a seminar going through the whole criteria in relation to an essay. Particularly helpful for exchange students who were unfamiliar with British academic cultural norms (e.g. Citing references)

Generative AI

The university are embarking on a review of AI and how it is used in assessment.

Do students feel they are being prepared for a workforce where AI will increasingly feature?

Concerns about the use of AI

Not happy with staff using AI to mark assessments when you can't appeal academic judgement. It does mean work is marked quicker, but students should be able to appeal academic judgement if it is AI.

Students don't always know if AI has been used to mark their assessments and there should be a statement if it has.

Students feel that even if there is a ban on marking work, lecturers would find a way around this in the way students use AI when told they shouldn't.

Category system can be confusing: students are told category 2 is the standard (minimal: eg. Grammar checking) but this is unclear if you are studying languages for example.

Concerns about the use of AI meaning students intellectual property is open to theft. UoB have said that staff should only use CoPilot AI which would prevent this and never to use open AI sources

A tick box on cover sheets giving consent for work to be used to enhance staff development. Can we have clarity that this isn't used to feed into LLM. Francesca to forward email from James Freeman about this – only in Arts at the moment

We're not even clear on what is meant by AI - is it only generative AI for example.

The faculties are too big to have a one size fits all policy – huge variance within faculties and disciplines.

Ethical objections to AI

There might be students who have ethical objections to using AI and if coursework says you have to there is no alternative. Students are forced to use technology that they disagree with on an ethical level.

If there really is no other way due to your discipline, the course information should be clear about this at the point of application.

Can the university offer guidance on how AI can be applied ethically or responsibly with lower impact on environment

UoB should have conversations about the ethical balance of using AI – comparing it to the time/effort/resources it could save balanced against the environmental impact.

Now we know the environmental impact as well as how bad it is for our ability to think independently and critically this needs to be examined

When are students using AI?

Business School students have used AI to generate their own feedback as the comments from the markers have been inadequate. Particularly used by international students. They have used AI to write assessments because they lack linguistic confidence. They then don't understand the feedback or find it unclear so have used AI.

Not enough time with tutors can result in students using AI ("what would a tutor say about this essay?"). Time poverty is leading students to rely more on AI.

There's a difference between using AI to locate sources for you to research and using it to write your essay.

Where AI is needed students need instruction on how to use it (prompt training)

Better advertising of library resources may show students what the alternatives available to them are.

Safety

1st Group

- People are more concerned about safety at night – has not heard much about safety on campus
- Concerns at committee members for when people are travelling back home.

- New students may experience a year without Bristol Safety which may impact how students view safety in Bristol.
- Misogyny at Bristol SU, men are become more isolated from the SU, and that lack of engagement causes them to enter extremist views.
- Targeted events for men to get them engaged so they are not harbouring any further rise of misogyny.
- Give it a go day was useful as a lot of people gathered and got to view Richmond building.

How can we get people engaged with the SU

- Doing video of, here is the place so people are not worried about getting lost.
-

2nd Group

Bristol Nights Closure

- Locations in Bristol can make some students can feel unsafe – St Pauls is one area.
- Living in a city, there will always be a sense of fear.
- Questions of the function of campus security – more information on what campus security could do? What is their remit?
- Rather than a march like reclaim the night – there needs to be better signposting to UoB services, information needs to make clear and easily accessible.
- Nightline has been removed from the back of U-Cards which was useful.
- Redesigning website – for example University of Bristol website, you must click on so many pages before getting information (SVO)
- In university app/group - where someone is in an area and they want to go home and get in contact to go home together, walking student group to walk together.
- People interested on setting up a similar app from previous House Meeting on safety.
- Bringing awareness to Strut Safe – not widely endorsed in Bristol
- If Bristol Nights is leaving – could there be those triangles that the SU can do.

- Walkthrough of how to access certain websites or including a chat – a flowchat to get a specific link with resources.

Support Centre on the SU website – how can we promote this area?

- For new students – if there was a pack that outlined all the resources
- Freshers Fair – a stand, qr for students to engage with.
- Re-registering, including the support when students have to register again on the su website – as a reminder.

How can we communicate this

- Minority of people cannot use social media – so physical materials on campus will be helpful

Societies

Memberships

- Performance societies rely heavily on trained members. Recent shifts in membership have made it difficult to retain trained individuals after they graduate or if they are external members, resulting in a loss of training capacity.
- **Response:** Former members can apply for a coach role/position.

Society AGMs, elections

- Concerns raised about AGM election practices, where candidates ask supporters to attend only part of the AGM (e.g. turning up at the end or only during their friends' section) to vote for them.
- **Response:**
 - In most societies, this is unconstitutional.
 - Members must be present for all speeches for votes to be valid.
 - The SU cannot send representatives to every AGM.
 - Outgoing officers and meeting chairs should be responsible for policing this.
- Suggestion to add clearer guidance to AGM materials to ensure proper enforcement across societies.

- While incidents can be reported to the SU, there was concern that enforcement should not rely solely on reporting and should be applied consistently across societies.
- Need for clearer, stronger AGM guidance to make AGMs fairer, more open-door, and more transparent.
- Different societies currently use very different voting systems (e.g. Mentimeter, hands up/eyes closed, Google forms, Microsoft forms, etc.).
- Discussion about whether parts of AGMs could be logged using the Union Cloud dashboard.
- Question raised on whether the SU could create shared tools or systems for societies.

Constitutions and Governance Transparency

- Some societies (e.g. Debate Society) do not clearly indicate where their constitutions can be found.
- Suggestion for a centralised database of society constitutions.
- A student wanted guidance on existing committee roles across societies to help with introducing or naming a new role.
- Likely solution identified as greater transparency:
 - Making constitutions more accessible.
 - Sharing them openly (e.g. links on society websites).
 - Adding a mandatory “View Our Constitution” link on main society pages.
- Concern expressed that some societies have become secretive about their constitutions.
- Acknowledged that societies are very different and should not be required to have prescribed or standardised roles across the university.

Voting Systems

- Issue raised regarding inconsistent voting platforms.
- A student without a Google account was unable to access voting forms.
- Discussion about unifying voting systems across societies:

- Recognised as difficult due to the number of societies.
- Potential options include a system linked to a database.
- Concerns about costs and time prohibitions.
- Suggestion to use Microsoft accounts/forms, as all students have Microsoft accounts.

Lack of Space and Rooms

- Many societies struggled to secure spaces for AGMs due to high demand at the same time of year.
- One society had to hold its AGM outdoors.
- **Response:**
 - Efforts are underway to open up as much space as possible, but significant increases are unlikely.
 - Possible focus on better communication about available spaces and how to book them.
 - Lecture theatres can be booked, but certain films cannot be shown there, which affects some societies.
 - University viewing-space policies are fixed and will not change.

Committee Communities and Communications

- Committee Connect (Thursday evening social meet-ups for committee members) was discontinued due to low attendance.
- Society Forums are expected to serve a similar purpose next year.
- Planned features of Society Forums:
 - Regular dates set well in advance.
 - Opportunities to meet other committee members.
 - Discussion of common issues within society categories.
 - Prioritisation of key issues.
 - Space to escalate concerns and coordinate events.
- From August, paid roles will represent society categories and lead these forums.
- Emphasis on the need for:

- Clearer escalation channels.
- Sharing best practice across societies.
- Stronger collaboration between societies.
- Forums will be timetabled to support attendance.
- Hybrid and asynchronous elements planned, with a full-year schedule mapped out in advance.
- Pilot forums this year had approximately 30 attendees, each representing a different society.
- Segmenting societies into categories is expected to:
 - Increase collaboration.
 - Help identify shared challenges.
- Aim for the SU to become more proactive about identifying and addressing systemic issues.

Codes of Conduct for Societies and Groups

- Concerns raised about non-affiliated societies engaging in hateful behaviour (e.g. “Reform UK” and reported “Wifebeater” socials).
- Questions about SU responsibility and policy when societies are not officially affiliated.
- **Response:**
 - The SU cannot take action against non-affiliated societies.
 - If individuals involved are students, jurisdiction lies under the university code of conduct.
- Suggestion for clearer guidance on non-affiliated groups:
 - They should be more upfront about their lack of SU affiliation.
 - Some groups appear to imply SU support when it does not exist.
- Possible SU actions:
 - Asking groups to remove content implying affiliation.
 - Generally avoiding public statements to prevent accidental promotion, even when rejecting affiliation claims.

Financial Barriers and lack of Access

- Disabled students struggle to engage with societies, even when societies are trying to be inclusive.
- Call for more guidance to help societies improve accessibility.
- Desire to reduce prohibitive costs associated with participation.
- High costs of running societies reported.
- Some societies did not receive financial support they applied for:
 - Funding was restricted to specific events.
 - Some societies (e.g. *Epigram*) provide ongoing services that did not fit funding criteria.
- Society leadership can be financially prohibitive:
 - One student had to give up a part-time job to act as society president.
- Noted that other Students' Unions provide more support to media societies.
- Suggestion to strengthen the relationship with the SU media contact
- Calls to widen the funding criteria for available grants.
- Societies face tension between providing accessible, open services and maintaining income from memberships.
- Particular concern raised about costs for *Epigram*:
 - It is a long-running, prestigious publication.
 - One of the few remaining university newspapers still in print.
 - Costs need to be reduced or better supported.

Activism on Campus

SCOs talking about going around campus and seeing how different facilities work on campus

Accessibility:

- When booking rooms, is there guidance on which rooms have accessible features

- Working with Linlu to update resources that have accurate information about accessibility features
- Better communication around accommodations for students with disabilities in school departments.
- Is it an equal issue across campus or do some students have it harder than others in regard to support?
- Seems to be more support around humanities schools compared to other departments

Visibility of campaigns

- Students don't know much about the activism that is being done. Maybe there needs to be more visibility around what is happening around campus.
- More awareness to what is happening on campus. More visibility on campus.
- Platforming the work that students are doing, even if it's not directly connected to the SU.
- Discussion over what types of activism can the SU support without there being legal repercussions.
- Aimee investigating sexual assault on campus. Issues in discussing certain issues such sexual assault. Not as much of a direct pathway to make change. Barrier between what the students want and the University wants

Solid evidence for showcasing how an issue is particularly prominent

- Idea: a digital space to showcase evidence for the why certain campaigns/ topics should be discussed in the student sphere.
- How do you increase support for ideas and campaigns such as this to have more support