

Student Council Forum 27.03.2025

Minutes

Welcome

Introduction and an explanation about how the meeting will run

FTO Updates

Student Poverty

Residential strategy:

- Campus Division have been having conversations about housing and buildings on campus
- The strategy is what they use to decide for 5 years about how many students should be in Bristol
- It also encapsulates the First Bus contract
- Felt like a positive meeting for Lucy

Q: is there anything about the U2 bus being discussed?

A: Email me with this and I can follow it up for you

£15,000 secured for laundry costs for students

More free food conversations on going

Recent Period Poverty talk

- Good conversations
- Aim is to get the university to continue free period products

We've opened a Community Cabinet on the fifth floor of Senate House

Academic Satisfaction

Russell Group Students' Union International Students' Survey – got over 4,000 responses across the RG, collating the asks to take to the government

Culture Changes around part-time work

- We know students are usually working over the required hours part time because of the cost of living, and that that can be detrimental to your studies
- Student facing: offering more support & guidance for students who are working
- Staff facing: a better culture of empathy for academic staff for students working part time, students are working so that they can be a student here, so more respect for that
- Part time work fair in October: for good employers in the local areas

Secured lockers for mature students & parents and carers network, or any student who feels like they need a locker

12 lockers on the 4th floor of Senate House – if you're interested get in touch with Dave Ingerslev (chair of the network)

Clearer access to marking criteria

- Lobbied for more opportunities for students to be involved with co-creating the criteria for assessment

Feedback Fellows

- 9 students who are paid to work with staff and students to improve assessment feedback
- Tangible skills for the Skills Profile that can be used in development opportunities and CV building

Uniformity in SSLCs

- Making sure they're more transparent and get better outcomes

Academic Advice service & improving access for PGRs

PRES – like the NSS for postgrad researchers, and the outputs of that

Collective Wellbeing

Conducted a survey on wellbeing culture in the University; designed to find out what the culture is like in the uni

Uni have launched a new portal for students to have a quicker triage appointment

More funding for the gender expression fund – able to help trans and non-binary students with the financial challenges they may face

SHAG week is coming up! Please get involved

New sensory spaces on campus

- Feedback on better lighting etc
- Sensory rooms are oversubscribed
- We've secured space in the Richmond Building

Injury Support Group happening on Friday mornings for any injured students, able to do rehab together and have a tea & cake

There will officially be a bus that takes students to their morning exams at Coombe Dingle ! with breakfast

Bak is working on cutting through the international student support webpages & cultural support for staff

Parasport take over at B:Active last week – campaign raised awareness about inclusivity and access to sport for disabled students

Society Forums – for groups to have more opportunities for feedback & Rate My Group is open for feedback

Democracy Updates

Ella

Wellbeing Champions now enacted for next year at the point of reaffiliation

Bak

More financial support for international students, working with uni staff to work on more financial aid for international students, wanting to extend this to schools too

Lucy

Inhouse guarantor scheme – still in conversation with the university, SU is dealing with how we make this situation the best it can be for students who are unable to get a guarantor

- More info: A lot of the time, landlords will ask for a guarantor. There are a lot of restrictions on who can be a guarantor and this disadvantages already marginalised students. The idea is that students are somewhat under the uni's care, and they should take responsibility for that legal relationship

Circuit Laundry - £15,000 secured for financial aid for laundry fund

- Is this just for first years in halls, looking at if we can put this money straight into a Washnet account

Divest borders – Lucy & Katie taking meetings with the campaigners

Motion on recycling soft and flexible plastics, getting the university to have these facilities on campus

The uni staff have said that they already have some recycling points for these. There are some issues with the use of these and are not keen to expand this, but they are committing to doing some research into the use of them.

Q: Could we enact point 2 to create some posters with information?

A: It's in the works

Katie

Motion got taken off the agenda at AMM, so would you be happy to have a chat about that?

Katie: happy to have a chat at a later point

Removing dolphin from the crest

Katie has entered conversations with the university marketing team

After the updates, the meeting moved onto discussing topics that had been previously chosen by DSC from a plethora of issues highlighted by the Big Bristol SU Survey. Each issue corresponded to a table, and each table was chaired by a Full-Time Officer. Students could choose to sit at the table with the topic most relevant to them.

Cost Of Living – Chaired by Lucy Pears

The group's discussion mainly focused on rent and housing, talking about how high the rents in Bristol are. International students also contributed their experiences with having to pay higher prices because of difficulties with guarantors and generally finding housing. They talked about the Activity Hardship Fund and considered whether it could be transformed into a more general fund. Suggested actions for the new year were: 1. Keeping 1st years informed about renting, what to expect, and what a standard rent price is; 2. Letting 1st years know not to immediately jump into looking for housing in TB1; Getting students to find out more information about first year halls.

Accessibility and Mental Health and Wellbeing – Chaired by Linlu Ye

The group discussed a variety of topics in the remit of Accessibility and Wellbeing.

They discussed the possibility of hiring a sign-language interpreter for events so as to not have to rely on volunteers from the Sign-Language Society.

They talked about accessing wellbeing services, and how to publicise them so they reach more students. They talked about the different ways they could be advertised, and the benefit of emails vs posters for this purpose. They also discussed looking into bi-lingual wellbeing services for international students. This discussion encapsulated both the services already existing at the university and how to advertise those, and ideas for new services, peer-to-peer or online, that students thought would be a good idea to explore.

They discussed room accessibility in the university, and the lack thereof. Many labs and classrooms in university buildings either only have stair access, or the lift is off-limit for students, or the lifts regularly don't work.

They discussed neurodivergence and getting support for it, and how it's really hard to get that at the university without a formal diagnosis.

Teaching on My Course – Chaired by Mia Stevens

The group discussed a variety of topics in the remit of Teaching

They talked about the new Personal Tutoring system that is being piloted in some schools, and discussed how PT is an important part of feeling supported on your course. They talked about how Joint Honours students are often left behind by this because their tutor is only from one of their Honours.

They talked about the delay in feedback and how even though it's now policy that feedback comes back within 15 days, this is not at all consistent. There's an action for Mia to follow up on the policy being implemented.

They discussed how marking is often inconsistent and its criteria confusing. They talked about how having a video on Blackboard that shows clearly how work is marked would be helpful. They would also like example essays which have very clear feedback explaining why the essay has been marked the way it has.

They discussed how deadline bunching is difficult.

Collaborative actions from the discussion are:

- co-write an email to Mark Alinson (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)- Education and Student Success Management asking for later return of feedback to be a grounds for students to ask for an extension on assessments impacted by late feedback
- create a motion for student council asking for better support for joint honours students - e.g. shared ownership between schools, better identification of unit convenors and other key staff

Support for Societies – Chaired by Katie Poyner

This group discussed issues with storage space, with accessing space and its cost, with getting SU support – in general and specifically in challenging unacceptable behaviour, and with fundraising. The following have emerged as actions or areas to work on:

- Transparency about storage space (and increased accessibility to this)
- Speaker and room booking timelines need to be lined up better (currently 2 weeks for room bookings but 3 weeks for a speaker, when it is awkward to have one booked without the other)
- More specific SU mailboxes so committees can better access support e.g. a room bookings one where they could resolve queries and check about speaker events in advance, students also suggested a 'mediations' one where they can send queries, as perhaps 'dev team' isn't as intuitive as a 'society support' mailbox title. Students expressed that it can take days to get through via the general SU one but aren't sure which other one to use.
- 'Please do not disturb' option on Skedda to try and prevent people walking into booked activity space, or signage for societies to use when hosting events that would be disruptive for students to walk in on

- Students suggested it could help for the SU to have a database of external rooms and list of pricing that groups can use, a 'one stop resource' / 'find a room' portal, embedded airtable on the website or maybe an interactive map (could be a collaborative resource with student groups) including off campus options.
- Students shared examples of spaces they use and could share with other groups, e.g. spaces used by dance society outside of the uni/SU
- Students also wanted room booking guidance for Langford campus
- President shared that room booking guidance seemed to be missing from both president and treasurer training , and that this would also be useful to put on the committee portal
- Students suggested a flow chart about handling difficult behaviour; i.e. when to have a meeting / how to respond to an incident in the society
- Mediation service desired by students to support with handling incidents between members, often try to have meetings on their own but sometimes things escalate so the SU only hears once things have gotten worse
- Space for knowledge sharing between societies e.g. lunch n learns on 'how to fundraise' between cause groups and networking events for societies, basing these events around common feedback across groups from Rate my Group
- Encouraging more collaborations between different groups, students felt it was 'limiting' to just encourage society collabs in the same area, for example platforming events like the collab between pole dance and history societies
- SU Re evaluating the speed of room booking process or holding the space in advance based on the 'stakes' (if they need a projector or certain capacity)
- Increase society and SU presence at Langford and access to space + storage (particularly for societies not affiliated with centaur)
- Some rooms on skedda, Richmond ones on airtable which is confusing -> would help to have these all in one place