

# Student Council 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024 Minutes

## Welcome from the chair

Safety, quiet space. Full agenda, so try to be concise. The DSC has decided the amount of time that everyone may talk – this will be notified by the bell.

## NUS Report

Introduction from Jude – 2nd year student. Elected NUS delegates went to the NUS national conference. We polled students about their priorities: Housing, Maintenance Loans and Grants, Furthering of International Student Rights. Discussing the motions that were up for voting at NUS. There was lots of interruption and wasting of time which delayed discussion at the conference. NUS conference will no longer exist, is being replaced by different campaigning collectives – this might happen online, might be at a national level – not clear yet. Tuesday 19th meeting happening online. NUS is the National Union of Students – students elected to delegate roles. Changing how SUs are represented – no longer elections, instead each SU can change how they select representatives.

## Officer Updates

Chair: please ask questions of your officers – this is a space to hold them accountable as your representatives.

### Ella – Sports and Student Development Officer

Derby Day will happen again after the success of last year's.

Recently secured 15k of funding for injury support group.

Working with Sport Exercise and Health team on This Girl Can events happening next week.

No questions from members.

### Katie – Union Affairs Officer

SU 100 years old!

Working on improving Officer Updates to make sure students know what we're working on

Working on the student group finance system

Question: re finance system – what is changing?

KP: Student group portal is one part of the system – making sure that students know what's happening with changes to finance systems. Making sure that student groups are represented in these discussions.

### Lucy – Student Living Officer

Two of the motions from previous councils have been implemented

Representing students in student housing issues and renters reform bill discussions.

Spoke to Carla Denyer about the housing bill

Working on getting more sensory rooms for students

No questions from members.

### Linlu – Equality Liberation and Access Officer

Free period products – working on central provision of period products, in addition to a one off donation of products

Working on new wellbeing system – would like to hear feedback for improvements

22nd Nov NUS liberation workshop at Senate House

Question: Lots of different protected characteristics – what are you doing for disabled community?

Linlu: have attended the network events with the Disabled Students' Network. Motion about accessibility on campus. I've raised this issue to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion group at the university. This will take more work, including working with the council.

### Mia – Undergraduate Education Officer

Working with Research and Insight looking into assessment feedback. Currently holding focus groups to inform this work, and bring student voices into university decision making.

Initiated a network looking into marking criteria. Involving students in these discussions.

Now able to pay students more for participation in research projects, and get a better understanding of students experiences.

Question: wondering about marking criteria – will there be any work around student wellbeing that crosses over – eg with issues around student wellbeing, accessibility, Exceptional Circumstances

A: Our roles as officers on these committees comes in here – we are across different wellbeing and academic committees. We want to hear your thoughts on these issues to take into these spaces.

## Bakhtawar – ISO

Setting a precedent of international students' week – happening this week. Campaigning and events. Celebration of diversity. Global food fair happening tomorrow.

Lobbying for international students at local and national level. Focus on guarantor scheme

Lobbied our MP Carla Denyer on how can we improve the situation in response to immigration plan and public response.

Research on international student experience at sector level

Set a precedent to have language workshops as part of transition to joining the university

No questions from members.

## Gurvin – Postgraduate Education Officer

Working on the priorities (Student Poverty, Academic Satisfaction, Collective Wellbeing)

Collaborating with other RGSU unions on extending Access Participation Plan – trying to implement the same support for postgraduate students

Working on a guidebook as part of a campaign to raise awareness among staff about the realities of students doing paid employment alongside studies

Planning PG specific events – such as family friendly movie night, game nights, Bath Christmas market

Borrow-a-Blazer scheme to support students going for interviews.

Question: regarding students working 20+ hours per week. Has there been any thoughts by the SU to provide income to students as at University of York

A: We've not looked into this yet, but if you emailed me I'd be happy to look at it. This project specifically was more about increasing empathy among university staff.

## Council Introduction and Information

### Explanation of Student Council Process

Proposal speech, speech against, Q+A, quick debate. 1 minute either for or against, back and forth, then go to vote. Explaining different options (as opposed to a straightforward

vote for or against the motion). Explanation of who is a voting member. The SU is for the students and led by students. The actions are often around lobbying the university, rather than being able to make decisions itself. Importance of getting together to influence student experience. Code of conduct introduction. Chair may issue warnings or remove someone from the meeting if they breach the code.

## Ratification of Student Council April 2024

As the past Student Council wasn't quorate, we will now seek to ratify that meeting.

Q: what does ratification mean?

A: just that the previous meeting wasn't quorate, so we will move to confirm and pass those motions

Q: can we hear the motions now?

A: We will not go through the motions now – this decision is based on whether the byelaws have been breached, rather than the content of the motions.

Q: so we are voting on whether we agree that no byelaws have been breached, rather than whether we agree with the motions?

A: Yes exactly.

Q: For clarification, if we do not ratify the meeting, the motions will not pass?

A: Yes that is correct.

Pause for voting.

Ratification motion: Passed

69% in favour 10% against 21% abstain

## Motions

### NUS Update Motion

Proposer speech – Katie Poyner

Changes happening at NUS re how they hold conferences and select delegates. This motion is about taking the power to be able to choose NUS delegates via our elected reps. This motion basically seeks to change our byelaws in line with the changes at NUS.

Question: The motion says officers will select the delegate, but you said reps would select them.

A: Yes – the officers are elected reps and will select the delegates.

Pause for voting.

NUS Update motion: Passed

84% in favour 6% against 10% abstain

## Representation Review Update

Proposer speech – Katie Poyner

This motion is exciting - it is the outcome of an 18 month review of our democratic and representative structures. Using the student feedback to create a new and lasting structure. Consultations heard that networks face limitations. This motion seeks to move community work to societies. In addition, introducing student community organisers – to bring groups together on shared goals and amplify student voices to create change. The community organisers will work with the officer team, and will be paid roles. The motion also updates the faculty rep system – making sure academic representation aligns with new university structure of faculties. This proposal sets an exciting new structure for student representation.

Question: what do you understand the principles of community organising to be?

A: inspired by the work of CitizensUK – to link communities who are fighting for the same thing, and thus building the power of these communities.

Question: motion says there will be at least one faculty rep for each faculty – but with the changing structure would mean there were only 3 faculty reps?

A: we would keep the 6 faculty reps to maintain the same level of representation. At least during this transition we would keep 6 reps.

Question: action 2 – could you summarise how the byelaws would change – is it just wording?

A: this will bring in the community organisers and allow them to be elected in TB2 elections

Question: how will the stipends be funded?

A: as we are a charity, it won't be an hourly wage. There will be obligations to fulfil to be able to access the stipend.

Question: currently networks receive SU funding – will they continue to receive it as societies?

A: they'll definitely still receive funding – and be able to access group grants as well. Will also be able to hold your own bank account rather than asking SU to order things.

Opposer speech: Adam Hilmi chair of BAME network.

Network system isn't perfect, and there's something to take from this motion about changes we can make. We stand to lose something by completely losing this structure of networks. Networks allows synergies among different groups to exist under one banner. Identity based networks promote student inclusion. Networks can be improved – such as increasing community organising within the networks. Power of different networks being able to work together to happen organically. We stand for something important when we think it is worth fighting for. We connect through people we relate to. Continuity is important, rather than starting from scratch.

Quick point for the motion: I think a pitfall this needs to avoid is lack of signposting – making sure that people who are already engaged aren't the only people whose voices decide a new system. Make sure that a new system is accessible to people. Stipend system needs to be thought of carefully, as we don't want people to be overworked and underpaid

Question: what is a student organiser meant to do, and what does the current system that this would replace do?

A (Katie): Student community organisers would carry out campaigning work and link up existing communities. Nothing would be lost about the networks – we are seeking to support them better by moving them to the society system. The networks were created a long time ago in a different climate of student political work.

Pause for voting.

Representation Review Motion: Passed

62% in favour 14% against 25% abstain

## Financial Support for International Students

Proposer speech – Tamie Karunaratne, International Students Network chair.

There is a lack of financial support for current undergraduate international students  
Disparity in support – University of Bristol bursary only available to home students, not international students - Almost a third of the student population are international

This is not a country-wide issue – University of Liverpool gives financial support based on academic performance, KCL has a specific international hardship fund

Purpose of the motion is to secure dedicated scholarships/bursaries for undergraduate international students

Actions – SU to lobby for these bursaries, and lobby the university to secure external sponsors. SU to collab with international student team to secure funding

Question: wanted to point out that there is a scholarship for international students – ‘Think Big’. Not against the motion though, just informing.

A: issue with that scholarship is it’s only for prospective students, not current students  
Pause for voting.

Financial Support for International Students motion: Passed

85% in favour 10% against 4% abstain

## Free Circuit Laundry

Proposer speech – Elliot Green

Circuit laundry should be free in all university accommodation. Students spend majority of maintenance loan on rent, and this should cover their living costs. Paying for every wash and dry uses up a lot of money – for me I spend a third of the money I have left after rent on laundry. This would improve student wellbeing, and impacts first years particularly, who are less likely to have jobs. Our plan is to lobby to get university owned machines at the end of the current 3-year contract. Want students to be given credit to use in the meantime.

Question: will this be that it’s free, or that people get credit? If it’s free, this might have sustainability impact.

A: The plan currently is credit, until the contract is used up and then look into university owned washing machines. We’d have to put forward an environmental strategy to avoid abuse of free system.

Question: Should also remind SU to lobby to ensure the machines and dryers are well functioning – many problems with broken facilities.

A: We can look into adding that.

Pause for voting.

Free circuit laundry motion: Passed

94% in favour 4% against 1% abstain

## Introduction of an anti-Palestinian racism definition to Bristol

Proposer speech – Mia Goldberg

Aiding Friends of Palestine society in supporting and protecting Palestinian students. Putting forward a definition. Many examples of discrimination against students who are calling for end of violence in Gaza. Students let down by university. Not an attempt to continue Israel/Palestine debate, but a way to support and protect students who are impacted by the violence. The motion would support encouraging the university in adopting the definition, and allowing students to access Exceptional Circumstances support. Would allow us to create focus groups to learn about how best to support impacted students.

Chair: We've received an amendment to this motion – it wasn't published beforehand, as they were still in discussion about whether to bring the amendment. Is the amendment proposer present?

They are not present.

Question: what will be done to support Jewish students – there is a rise in antisemitism as well as Islamophobia.

A: the university already has a definition of antisemitism. Palestinian students currently do not have an anti-Palestinian racism definition. This motion is not about Jewish students.

Pause for voting.

Introduction of an anti-Palestinian racism definition to Bristol motion: Passed

80% in favour 5% against 14% abstain

## BREAK

### Adjusting Graduation Dates

Proposer speech - Tamie Karunaratne, International Students Network chair.

Accommodate postgraduate international students with winter graduation dates. Graduation is a significant milestone, but many international students can't attend due to visa restrictions, travel issues, cultural observations. They would need to go back to their home country and then fly back for graduation. Purpose to lobby university to accommodate international students. Lobby the university to review the schedule of graduations. Collect feedback from students about graduation dates. Connect with relevant networks to raise awareness of these issues



Question: when do the winter students officially finish their courses?

A: Bakhtawar (ISO): Postgraduate students finish in September.

Pause for voting.

Adjusting Graduation Dates motion: Passed

83% in favour 4% against 13% abstain

## Proposition for the SU to support the Divest Borders Campaign

Proposer speech Tamryn Nicol, Student Action for Refugees (STAR)

Upholding student union values, challenging university. University invests in companies who profit from the border industry University uses Rathbone Green which fails to exclude companies who profit from human rights abuses. Holding the university to account. It's not about breaking partnerships or ties which would negatively impact students. As a university of sanctuary the university commits to being a place of safety for refugees. SU to support groups lobbying the university.

Q: What are the divestments?

A: Not trying to dictate, just providing guidance to the university, believe the university should uphold its values as a university of sanctuary

Q online: would this extend to the use of check-in app? As surveillance

A: No, not related to any tech use on campus

Q: do the numbers in the appendix refer to the profits from the BSI

A: Yes

Q: Do you have an example of what an ethical company would be

A: we can't control what they invest in, we can influence what they divest from. There are many companies that are uninvested in that are more community based. University's goal is to make money and investments are to make money – we don't think our suggestions make a difference but we can give a list of those they should divest from

Q: won't this have a financial burden on the university and SU?

A: there are lots of industries that aren't doing these things that are profitable to invest in, they could just redirect their funds

Pause for voting

Proposition for the SU to support the Divest Borders Campaign motion: Passed

63% in favour 21% against 16% abstain

## Accessibility for students with disabilities at University of Bristol

Seconder giving proposing speech: Raisha Jesmin Rafa

Accessibility issues have a huge impact on the student experience of disabled students. Highlighting some examples of accessibility issues, and explaining that these can be physical and social. Feel that the measures the university has taken to address accessibility are inadequate. Actions include: educating all students about disability and accessibility issues such as through a compulsory module, lobbying the university to work with the city council to redress the poor infrastructural issues, and lobbying the university to conduct annual accessibility audits.

[During the speech, the Chair asked the proposer if they'd be comfortable removing their face-mask, as there was a student in the audience who needed to lip-read. The proposer said they were not comfortable, and kept their mask on.]

Question: why specifically Muslim prayer facilities in action 6?

A: because the issue was raised by the Islamic society specifically regarding these spaces

Chair: an amendment was proposed by a student, and the proposer of the motion accepted the amendment, which is why action 6 was added.

Question/point: Would like to add compulsory diversity training to the requests made by this motion – as I lip read and you wearing a mask [to the seconder giving the proposing speech] meant I was unable to lip read. I think more thorough training should be provided so that different needs can be discussed.

Chair: clarifying that the proposer is allowed to keep their mask on.

Questioner: I understand that, but I am just explaining why thorough training would be useful, and the impact it has on my access to the meeting.

Question: Are you aware of access issues on Woodland and Priory road.

A: yes, the proposer has had this problem and that is part of the reason for this motion.

Question: wondering about the proportion of disabled students studying law?

A: I am not in a position to answer this question

Question/point: I just wanted to support the point made by action 6. Multifaith spaces are very difficult to access even in terms of signposting.

Pause for voting.

Accessibility for students with disabilities at University of Bristol motion: Passed

91% in favour 6% against 3% abstain

## End All Forced Swimming Experiments at the University of Bristol

Seconder giving proposing speech: Hugh Pender

The speaker gave an explanation of the forced swim test (from motion). The study investigates stress, but the experiment is scientifically flawed. There's a difference between acute and chronic stress, which means the test is inaccurate. Home Office has stated intention to eliminate the test. The university has stated its intention to continue the test. Motion asks SU to raise awareness, raise the issue at Senate. Many prospective students would have their choice of university influenced by use of this test. This builds on the previous motion on this topic by putting it into action.

Question: I agree with the motion. In what context does the university continue, why do they keep doing it?

A: it is supposedly to study stress. Freedom of Information request shows that they've not conducted it in the past year, but retain the license to do so.

Question: how are the rats and mice sourced, are they bred specifically for this?

A: Yes

Question: what alternative would you suggest?

A: there are many things which can't be studied in animals in a way that is applicable to humans. Human based testing would be better in this case.

Question: do you know why they decapitate them after the experiment?

A: I don't know. It could be cost, I've seen videos where it is done with scissors.

Question/point: decapitation is instant, whereas euthanasia by gas is a drawn out death. I don't disagree with the motion, but you've employed a lot of emotive language which obscures the points made.

A: On the gas point – they could spend the money on it to gas them with something other than CO2 that would have a different effect.

Pause for voting.

End All Forced Swimming Experiments at the University of Bristol motion: Passed

75% in favour 12% against 13% abstain

## Easier Access to Support Services for International Students

Proposer speech – Bakhtawar Javed, International Students' Officer

30% international students at the university. Lots of support needed, particularly by students who are new to the country. Example of students being victims of scams, which they're vulnerable to newly in the country. The university lacks a specific support service – international students get passed between many different services which is frustrating. Would be better to have an international support hub, one central place to be signposted to relevant support. Makes it clearer for students to access support which improves the experience. The motion proposes doing research into the gaps in existing support, and then lobbying for a dedicated international support team.

Question: interested in why this should be specifically targeted to international students – all students face the issue of being bounced between different services

A: my focus is on international students as the International Students' Officer. The motion provides for tailored support, but wouldn't detract from existing support for home students

Question: hub – in person, online, both?

A: my preference would be in person, but due to resources it may need to be online. But ideally it could be hybrid online and in person.

Question: re the hub – what are the issues that are specific to international students?

A: one example is a PGR student who wanted to access maternity support, which came in conflict with her studies. International students only entitled to 2 months maternity leave, home students are entitled to 6, due to impact on visa. She had to ask the International Students' Officer as she didn't know where to access help.

Question: how is it adding on support?

A: It's not only adding on – it's improving access to existing services which are currently underutilised because people don't know they exist. It will streamline existing support.

Pause for voting.

Easier Access to Support Services for International Students motion: Passed

94% in favour 2% against 4% abstain

Meeting Ended.