Student Council June 2021 Minutes

Introduction

**Ifrah:** There are6 motions to cover today, we’ll have a break around 5.15 then we’ll have officer updates, and then continue with the motions.

A bit about what student council is: we discuss and vote on motions, if passed they become policy for 3 years. You get 90 seconds to speak as the motion presenter. Voting will happen after the meeting as that is easier with the online format.

Motions

**Motion 1: Students’ Union to Lobby the University for Increased In-person Teaching.**

*Proposed by:*

Proposers: Molly Pipe

Seconders: Scott Raven

**Scott Raven:**

1. There is widespread sentiment in the student body that in-person contact hours should return to pre-pandemic levels next academic year. Many students are dismayed at the thought that online contact hours, which they find difficult and isolating, will continue even if COVID-19 infection rates are negligible.
2. However, the University seems set to water down face to face contact hours regardless of the situation with COVID-19.
3. They have set mandatory minimums of six ‘live’ contact hours a week per student next term, but some are concerned that these may include live, online classes. There are also plans to hold large lectures online, which many do not feel the need for.
4. Some are concerned that the continuation of blended learning next year will lead to the ‘slippery slope’ of it being part of university education long-term.

**Actions**:

1. The SU will lobby the University to restore in-person teaching to pre-pandemic levels, unless COVID-19 becomes a significant risk during teaching blocks.
2. Should this prove to be unworkable, the SU should seek mandatory minimums for each subject that refer specifically to face to face contact hours (not just ‘live’ contact hours, which could be online), and which are tailored to each subject, with practical subjects having more contact hours than non-practical ones.
3. The SU will consider the need for exemptions that allow online teaching for students who cannot access in-person teaching, e.g. students who cannot reach campus.
4. The SU will reject the idea that teaching should be blended in the first instance. It will take the position that the default should be in-person teaching, and the University should only move to online teaching should infection rates of COVID-19 become a legitimate concern.
5. The SU will seek to make the University transparent about how much in-person teaching students will receive from as early a date as possible.

**Against**: no one.

**Questions**:

**Mathew Kilgour**: you mention under action 1 that lobbying will happen unless covid becomes a significant risk, what is your criteria for this?

**Scott**: government guidelines, I’m not in a position to make that call so we will be in line with the government guidelines.

**Harry**: I’m not going to deny that it is clear that the majority of students want to return to in person, but what about students who are struggling with a disability, I have autism and anxiety, will the motion take these students into account?

**Scott**: the motion is to push the Uni to prioritise in-person return, that does not mean we’re back to a full in person situation. Action 3 says there will some exemptions for certain students and these students shouldn’t be penalised.

**Harry**: I wanted to know about specific measures that will be put in place to ensure all students feel comfortable coming back to the classroom.

**Scott**: yeah, ultimately it’s to ensure that a precedent isn’t set for us to stay online in the future, if you would like to put something more specific in the actions I would be really open to that.

**Motion 2: Improving Governance, Democracy and Membership Engagement**

*Proposed by:*

Proposers: Jason Palmer

Seconders: Ruth Day

**Jason Palmer:**

1. Between 2019-2021, based on student and Network feedback, the SU initiated a review of the function of Networks.
2. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the more comprehensive democracy review that was going to take place has been pushed into the future.
3. Given that Networks were introduced as part of the last democracy review, it was expected that there may be issues that need to be revisited down the line.
4. All Elected Reps sit on Standing Committee, and therefore any changes to the Networks are likely to impact on other democratic structures.
5. In line with students repeatedly asking for more accessible democratic events and due to the online pivot, it is important to establish how all democratic events, regardless of the mode they are delivered in (i.e. in person, digital, blended) should be accessible to all.
6. There are broader issues with membership engagement, such as students raising that they do not know what the Union does or how to influence its policy.
7. Even if students understand the function of the Union, this may not translate into having faith in the SU.
8. The SU has been pushing for the University to decolonise all aspects of student life.
9. The SU should not just be trying to engage students with the Union, but with the University as a whole.
10. The previous All Bristol Student Forum, which engaged Uni staff with students, were stood down in 2018.
11. Strong media societies are an important part of a healthy democracy.
12. Given frequent reports of low awareness and faith in University hate crime reporting, the SU should be looking for new avenues to support students.
13. Becoming a third-party hate crime reporting centre is not a new concept for SU’s, with Goldsmiths, Lancaster, Warwick, UCL and others having adopted this model.

**Purpose**:

1. To ensure Bristol SU is an effective representative channel for its members by ensuring Networks and democratic spaces are fit-for-purpose.
2. To better support the personal development of Bristol students by expanding opportunities to engage with the SU and University.

**Actions**:

*Networks and Democracy*

1. To amend the Standing Mandate of all networks to insert the following where appropriate: “- where necessary and appropriate the network may take policy stances independently”

* BAME Network 3.1.v
* Black Students’ Network 3.1.v
* Care Leavers and Estranged Students Network 3.1.iv
* Disabled Students Network 3.1.v
* Education Network 3.1.ii
* International Students Network 3.1.iv
* LGBT+ Network 3.1.iv
* Mature Students, Parents and Carers Network 3.1.iv
* Multifaith Network 3.1.iv
* Postgraduate Network 3.1.iv
* Societies Network 3.1.ii
* Sports Network 3.1.ii
* Sustainability Network 3.1.ii
* Trans Network 3.1.v
* Volunteering and Fundraising Network 3.1.ii
* Wellbeing Network 3.1.ii
* Widening Participation Network 3.1.v
* Women Network 3.1.iv

1. To amend the byelaws as appropriate to allow the Full-Time officer team to allocate 121 responsibilities for Liberation Networks between themselves, whilst ensuring the ELA still holds ultimate responsibility:

* To amend 8.16.d to read “Support and develop liberation, Multifaith, Widening Participation, Mature Students, Parents & Carers Network, Care Leavers & Estranged Students Network and other Networks as appropriate. The responsibility for the support and development of liberation networks may be divided between the Full-Time officer team at the commencement of their terms of office each year. But ultimate responsibility will remain with the ELA officer.”

1. The SU to review the effectiveness and function of Standing Committee.
2. The SU to review the accessibility of its democratic events.
3. The SU to investigate the remuneration of Part-Time Network Chairs.
4. The SU to explore how student voice on policy issues can be better heard between Democratic Events.

*Membership Engagement*

1. The SU should look to reintroduce the All-Bristol Student Forums to bring University staff and students together with:
   1. A student-generated agenda.
   2. Co-chairing between an Elected Officer and the Vice-Chancellor.
2. The SU to introduce Student Media Consultations for Elected Representatives to work more closely with media societies.
3. The SU to become a third-party Hate Crime Reporting Centre.
4. The SU to seek to expand the Activity Hardship Fund to meet demand.
5. The SU to facilitate a Decolonise Bristol SU campaign.

**Against**: no one.

**Questions**:

**Hisham**: what specifically are you addressing with the decolonise part? What problems have you identified and how to combat that?

**Jason**: it’s very broadly phrased to allow the members the flexibility to do what want to do on this, so it is led by them and taken forward by them, and making sure the university is supporting their work, money is going towards it and there is a platform given to them, so it can be a grassroots effort rather than exclusively from the top-down.

**Motion 3: Inclusive Student Spaces and Experiences – Now and in the Future**

*Proposed by:*

Proposers: Jason Palmer

Seconders: Ruth Day

**Jason Palmer**:

1. The University is currently undertaking two major strategic developments: the Temple Quarter Campus (<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/temple-quarter-campus/>) and Campus Heart (<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/campus-heart/>).
2. Student groups and students have consistently fed back on the need for better prayer space provision on campus.
3. Through feedback from the Parents, Carers and Mature Student’s Network, issues in relation to the Universities nursery provision (e.g. cost, location) are yet to be mitigated against.
4. The Senate House refurbishment, part of the Campus Heart project, has seen the creation of the first sensory space on campus to support neurodivergent students.
5. There is continued demand for gender-neutral facilities.
6. Now is an opportune and strategic time to influence current and new developments, prior to their completion.

**Purpose**:

1. To promote the welfare of Bristol students through ensuring there are inclusive spaces in current and future campus development projects.

**Actions**:

1. The SU should explore the need for, and feasibility of, an SU Nursery to operate both on the Clifton Campus and in Temple Quarter.
2. The SU must continue to lobby the University on the creation of:
   1. Prayer spaces;
   2. Sensory spaces;
   3. Gender Neutral facilities in current and future new campus developments.
3. The SU to undertake an all-student consultation on space prioritisation to determine what student-spaces the SU should be opening.

**Against**: no one.

**Questions**: N/A.

**Motion 4: Byelaw Stage 2 Changes**

*Proposed by:*

Proposers: Julio Mkok, Union Affairs Officer

Seconders: Jason Palmer, Equality, Liberation and Access Officer.

**Julio**:

1. Bristol SU is governed by its Byelaws, which  lay out many of our rules and procedures.
2. The Byelaws have been reviewed with a legal expert and staff team and some changes have been recommended below.
3. The focus of this review is on ensuring that the byelaws assist in delivering the structures students currently adopt.
4. Trustee Board approved these changes on 25 Mar 2021
5. There is a requirement in the Byelaws for Student Council to also approve any required changes.

**Purpose**:

1. To ensure our Byelaws are fit for purpose and provide clarity rather than confusion.
2. Its purpose was to identify:
3. obsolete provisions;
4. gaps between byelaw provision and current practice to seek to align them;
5. areas where the byelaws are unclear and need rewording;

**Actions**:

1. To adopt the proposed amendments to the Byelaws.

**Against**: no one.

**Questions**: N/A.

**Motion 5: Increasing Input into the University’s Anti-Racist Initiatives**

*Proposed by:*

Proposers: Khadija Meghrawi

Seconders: Gabriel Starkey

**Khadija**:

This council welcomes the aims of the Anti-Racist Steering Group in decolonising the university, increasing racial diversity, and decreasing the BAME attainment gap. It celebrates some of the achievements in the past year, including the CARGO app and scholarships for Black students. However, it is concerned with the current timelines and priorities of the anti-racist initiatives of the university and wishes to support increased focus on the commitments previously made.

A recent survey by the BAME network and Decolonise UoB found that 88% of students are either completely unaware or only know a little of the activities to decolonise Bristol University by the University senior management and leadership team, and 45% are not at all satisfied.

I do not think enough has happened, the group lacks the funding and infrastructure – there needs to be more support for this anti-racist group. The group needs more support and funding and the SU needs to be putting more into it in an official way not just through student reps. I think no one has enough time, I think certain individuals are very overworked and don’t have enough time. There needs to be paid and protected time for the working group

**Purpose**:

1. To promote structural change and increased resource to meet the group’s aims and commitments.
2. To encourage wider input into the timelines and strategies of this group, to ensure that our university members are able to input and be a part of the changes that are made.
3. To encourage the SU to support the group with increasing awareness and celebration of the achievements that are made.

**Actions**:

1. Conduct a formal review of the student body’s views on what the aims, priorities, and timelines of what the decolonising and anti-racist initiatives of the university should be, in order to provide more input into those of the Anti-Racist Steering Group
2. Provide dedicated marketing and communications support to the Anti-Racist Steering Group, in order to support them in increasing awareness around their achievements and activities.
3. Lobby the university to create an independent group of key stakeholders amongst students, staff and the city to formally assess the work of Anti-Racist Steering Group and produce public reports on this
4. Lobby the university to increase funding to the Anti-Racist Steering Group, including producing paid protected time for their meetings with the aim of increasing their frequently and duration
5. Lobby the university to create a formal recruitment drive to increase the number of staff and students who are members of the Anti-Racist Steering Group
6. Lobby the university to add “Churchill” to the current list of building names to be renamed, and to consider other suggestions for buildings to be renamed.

**Against**:

**Columbus**: This entire motion is another front in the cultural wars, if either side starts an offensive action in this war, it is immediately countered by the other side, any social change results in back-lash, which although this motion isn’t specifically that strong, it does contribute to the feeling of rapid change in society, my question is whether the proposer is willing to perpetuate a damage to the social discourse and whether she is prepared to accept responsibility for the inevitable backlash that will come from central government.

**Khadija**: the question asker hasn’t pointed to specific points in the motion that they think will lead to this, so it’s hard for me to respond to that when I haven’t been given specifics, and I think that’s what happens in a lot in these arguments. All the motion is saying is that the university needs to act on what it has said it stands for.

**Questions**:

**Hisham**: my concern with the motion is that people at the university are talking the talk but don’t actually care about the issue, and I don’t know how to pressure them.

**Khadija**: I understand why you have this concern; we’ve had some sessions where UoB senior management have been asked about whether it is performative or real. I think some good things are happening, but not enough is happening and the anti-racist group needs to be more supported and funded. This questions that you’re asking can be asked to them directly at some point.

**Leah**: what do you mean paid and protected time for the working group?

**Khadija**: at the moment it’s added in as something that’s beyond their job description and is seen as an add on, rather than something in their role. I can think of a few notable individuals who do have this in their job description, but they are being massively overworked with this. We need to hire more people and pay people to do this.

**Hisham**: I’m aware of the horrible aspects of our history, as well as any nation of age, how do you think changing the name of a building impacts a black person or person of colour at the Uni or anyone else, I don’t see this as a poignant or important thing to be doing.

**Khadija**: naming and renaming is only one of the subgroups, everyone has different opinions on this, but some students do find it deeply upsetting that they are studying in buildings named after slave traders. I agree with you in that it should not be the only thing we focus on, we need to address the attainment gap and wellbeing support, it’s not the only thing but it is one of the issues that the anti-racist steering group are working on.

**Hisham**: will there be discussions about whether it is good or bad to remove aspects of the city’s history?

**Khadija**: there is going to be a forum on naming soon, the anti-racist steering group has already spoken to staff, students, and organisations in the city, it does need to be a wider discussion. I think that we are at a sage now that the legacy of these slave traders should not be celebrated and the names should be removed, I think that is the consensus. But I would want there to be space for people to say they think it is not a good idea even though I personally support it.

**Motion 6**: Supporting Students who Have Experienced Sexual Misconduct

*Proposed by:*

Proposers: Jason Palmer

Seconders: Ruth Day

**Ruth**:

1. Earlier this year, the ELA Officer commissioned a research project on consent culture and sexual violence to be released later this term.
2. From previous research conducted in 2018 (Let’s Talk About Sex): 40% of women felt safe walking home compared to 90% of men; 52% of students experienced harassment.
3. The death of Sarah Everard earlier this year, alongside the national increase in gendered and domestic violence, has resulted in issues of sexual misconduct on campus being on the agenda. Issues of lighting when walking home in residential areas was frequently raised by students.
4. Everyone’s Invited – an organisation exposing rape culture and sexual assault at Universities – named Bristol University on their website - <https://epigram.org.uk/2021/04/18/bristol-uni-named-on-website-exposing-rape-culture-and-sexual-assault-at-universities/>
5. Some student groups and clubs have been raising issues with the SU in terms of care pathways being unclear.
6. The University has not worked on creating a culture of consent at Bristol, having not run consent workshops since 2016. Instead, they have been focussed on the expansion of their Sexual Violence Liaison Officer Team (SVLO).
7. The SU does not have any trained SVLOs who can take disclosures.
8. Balloon Bar staff used to receive Bystander training.
9. New bars (e.g. Beckford) are now open, yet staff do not have Bystander training.
10. Preventing sexual violence and building a culture of consent take time and need to be research informed.

**Purpose**:

1. To promote the welfare of Bristol students through ensuring the Union has robust and accessible support for victims of sexual misconduct.
2. To ensure the SU is an effective representative channel for its members by conducting further research to make general and underrepresented student views known.
3. To promote the welfare of Bristol students as students in the City by campaigning for further public safety.

**Actions**:

1. The SU to work with the University of Bristol to deliver an Annual Climate Survey on Sexual Misconduct at UoB.
2. The SU should explore the creation of an SVLO team to work with the University and external organisations in supporting students reporting harassment or assault.
3. The SU to lobby Bristol City Council and the University to improve lighting in student residential areas with high footfall.
4. The SU to lobby for all staff in University bars to be trained in being active bystanders.
5. The SU should seek to facilitate the creation of:
   1. A student peer-support group for victim-survivors of sexual violence.
   2. A campaigning student group on consent culture at Bristol University.
6. The SU to conduct further research into the experiences of sexual violence in historically oppressed identities by working with the Liberation Networks.

**Against**: no one.

Questions: N/A.

Break

Officer Updates

**Julio - Union Affairs Officer**

Recap of year and big wins, introduction of SU student group of the month, launching global language, pan-African festival in line with uni’s internationalisation strategy, opening of Senate House and food court, Beckford Bar opening on June 21st, Loft active, established new pay grade through the renumeration committee which is more equitable, secured up to £40,000 from alumni grants to support student groups and welcome week programme

**Roy - International Students’ Officer**

In TB1 secured funding from uni to cover cost of PCR tests of £150 per test for international students and study abroad students, in TB2 extended to £210 to cover quarantine costs, uni pledging to pay for incoming quarantine for students from red listed countries, pay all quarantine support and test release costs for 2021-22, ran fee justice now campaign, national petition with international students officers from Russell Group unis across the UK, reached 10,000 signatures within 2 days, joint letter to Chair of the Russell Group and letter to Robert Halfon MP Chair of Education Select Committee, launched SU job shop so international students can find parttime work, mentorship programme for international students, supporting ESEA students and societies to raise awareness of issues and communicate it to student inclusion team, attended sinophobia event run by BAME network, ran survey to see where instances of racism are happening

**Rushab – Sport and Student Development Officer**

Secured Wednesday afternoons for sport, worked with beat this together to deliver training around fatphobic language and diet culture for sports committees and SEH staff, secured women and LGBT+ only swim sessions, ran workshop with SEH and BME success advocate programme to learn about barriers to participation for BME students, chaired and organised club captain forums to get an understanding of what support they needed, restructured we are Bristol process to make it more inclusive, Movember raised over £54,000

**Jason – Equality, Liberation and Access Officer**

Main focus on sexual violence, phase 1 of sexual violence research complete and soon to be published, secured commitment from uni to run consent workshops for all new students, for first time since 2016 there is a committee to discuss issues of sexual violence in the student body, met with shadow leader of house of commons, research is feeding into legislative work on licensing to make the sale of alcohol in bars and clubs contingent on policies preventing sexual harassment in those venues, keeping universities UK to account nationally, working with OFS to keep unis accountable where they fail to meet their duty of care, expanded uni SVLO team to 20 people from less than 5 originally, met with new night time economy advisor to discuss safety as things reopen, working with groups like halt harassment on citywide responses, introduction of LGBT flats for incoming first years, introduced graduation bursary for care leavers and estranged students and sanctuary scholars, working on access to gender affirming care, supporting networks, oversecuritisation of campus, many liberation matters

**Leah – Postgraduate Education Officer**

Academic mitigations work over 7 months not perfect but proud of it, proposed funding initiative named postgraduate research progression pipeline to pro vice chancellor for research and enterprise which would integrate anti-racist initiatives, decolonising curriculum and diversifying researchers and research output, worked with student liberation groups to make sure academic effects of pandemic didn’t inequitably affect postgraduate community, particularly liberation groups eg parents and carers, disabled students and students from low income backgrounds, lobbying for more financial support, pushing back on adverse effects of lengthening teaching week, digital accessibility, producing a guide on personal tutoring and best practice particularly PGT tutoring, worked on research project looking at effects of widening participation identities on PGT students, worked on relationship building, small projects which will inform work as ELA

**Ruth – Student Living Officer**

Supporting rent strike won £30 million in rent rebates and no penalty rent releases for students in halls, continued pushing for rent reductions in private sector, writing to landlords, meeting with local MP and chief executive of Russell Group, put together legal case about accommodation contracts, lawyers looking at it now, supported JCRs on getting tenancy extensions, mental health: personal tutoring reform, training and equalities guidance, pushing uni to increase amount of staff in support services, supporting liberation network chairs with wellbeing priorities, drugs: drop in with Bristol drugs project, drug awareness training for wellbeing staff, housing: more affordable beds for next year, created uni accommodation strategy with long term rent reduction plans, supporting housing co-op to find first home and grow membership, engaging the council on their spatial development plans, pushing for more affordable student blocks in the city, improved the way we get feedback from JCRs, alcohol free flats for next year, improving halls life for student parents, climate emergency: set up first uni climate action day, consultational work around uni’s contracts with arms companies, planning for cop 26, working with veg soc on holidng uni to account on their sustainable food action plan, looking at getting plastic free shop in SU next year

**David – Undergraduate Education Officer**

Pushing for as much in person teaching as possible for next year, have to be in step with rest of society, success in increasing levels of in person teaching, pushing uni to release plans as soon as possible, working on assessment reform and academic mitigations, keeping the good bits of online assessments, held 11 large education forums, feeding back student opinion on blended learning, working with faculty reps to lobby on study spaces, raised 4 hour cap and opened more, fee campaign: managed to shape national conversation though letter to CMA, supporting students achieve local outcomes through complaints to OIA, set SU’s strategy for decolonising curriculum and student working groups, climate emergency day of action, new sustainability programme, sustainability champions as paid role next year

**Questions**

No questions

Closing goodbyes