

Minutes of the Union Executive Meeting

Wednesday the 7th of September 2020

Present: Ade, Temi, Akeem, Jess

In Attendance: Rhiannon, Stevie, George (Minuting)

1. Welcome and Introductions

TA welcomed all to the meeting

2. To receive apologies for absence

TA accepted the apologies of SC, EM

3. AOB

None

4. Minutes from last meeting (date)

The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted and approved

Updates from Actions:

TA updated on the actions from the previous meeting.

AOO provided clarity on the Sabbatical engagement with ADAs in Academic Schools.

JW spoke with NW (ADA of H&S School) and confirmed that Rep recruitment is a focus as of now due to deadlines.

AO had to rearrange meeting with ADA but further engagement will take place.

RR clarified that this needs to be an ongoing project; to constantly communicate with ADAs and programme leads as we continue throughout the academic semester.

TA spoke with SS regarding the Sports and Socs Exec holding the delegated responsibility to hold clubs and societies to account. Further discussion with Sports and Socs Exec will take place, before coming to Union Exec for final approval.

5. Campaign Expenditure Proposals

None for now.

6. University Committee Updates:

TA and AOO have University Council on Friday, so an update can be provided at the next Union Exec.

AO, AOO and JW confirmed that no Committee meetings have taken place since the last meeting.

7. Sabbatical Officer Updates:

JW Update:

JW updated on academic misconduct campaign, focusing on running a campaign that supports specifically BAME students.

JW stated that the placement objective is progressively smoothly following a productive meeting a few weeks ago.

Other objectives are moving along.

JW put forward a question regarding what ideas can be drawn for their objective on supporting student mental health.

TA reiterated that our focus should be on advertising the services that are available to students currently rather than creating something new.

AO identified that the Union may be underusing the societies at the Students' Union; to both promote the activities and opportunities to the student body and also, in supporting the students and improving their mental health.

RR agreed, stating that each sport and society has a wellbeing officer in the committees.

Action: ALL speak with Sports and Socs Committees to disseminate the information and support available to students.

RR informed the team that Rafiki volunteers will be providing greater outreach and support to students across the University, specifically students who are self-isolating and may be socially isolated, therefore needing a proactive callout from Rafiki volunteers.

Action: RR and JW to work with AH and BA regarding communicating the great work Rafiki does. TA also added that HB (Community and Wellbeing Officer) should be involved in this meeting too.

AOO Update:

AOO has made progress regarding improving student engagement as per engaging with ADA and providing programme shoutouts on academic courses.

AOO provided an update regarding Sabbatical Officers being available on the online, live chat service, to engage with students in various ways. Liaising with SW and HL regarding the logistics of this further engagement.

AOO expressed that the current standing of having Sabbatical Officers on campus everyday is no longer possible. This has changed to one Sabbatical Officer on campus, once a week. AOO has worked with LB regarding formulating a plan of engagement activities for students and Sabbaticals to be involved in. AOO expressed it keeps the Sabbatical Officers engaged with students and successfully addressing the thoughts of students.

AOO is still working with BA regarding the online communications plan. Welcome has proven difficult to have this worked on in September.

AOO has worked directly with MC regarding improving the opportunities for students and course reps to create academic societies.

AOO celebrated the work AOO and TA have done on BHM. AOO provided an in-depth update on BHM activities.

AOO provided an update regarding the Recorded Lecture policy. UCU at Salford and the academic community are supportive of recorded lectures, yet there is still not a policy reinforcing the mandatory use of recorded lectures.

AO Update:

AO thanked Madame President TA.

AO updated the committee on the Industry Collaboration objective. AO will be speaking with ADA of the B&L School. An update would have been provided in greater detail but the 1-2-1 with ADA was postponed.

AO aims to increase the number of events and opportunities for students in the B&L School to get involved in. Further conversations are needed.

AO provided an update for the committee regarding their work on diversifying the food options in AKB and the University (Salford).

RR and TA provided clarity on the delay to the completion of the scoping document due to the recent circumstances with COVID and AKB.

AO alluded to the later agenda item which related to their individual objective of supporting international students with accommodation concerns. Further discussions will take place later in the meeting.

TA Update:

TA expressed that their time is extremely busy at the moment. Major updates on individual objectives is not as extensive in this meeting.

8. Shared Sabbatical Objectives Update

TA expressed that following on from the last meeting, Shared Sabbatical Objectives will now be compressed into general Sabbatical Objectives.

Action: GC to combine both agenda items into one.

SW Joined Meeting

9. Student Tuition Fee Update

AOO relayed information to the committee regarding a separate meeting that took place between JW, AO, AOO, LB, GC and SC on student fees, international student fees and the Union's stance on student tuition fees in COVID.

AOO concluded that there is a clear separation between the messaging that has been put forward from the HE sector over the past 10 years that student tuition is not simply about teaching and education, but about the overall student experience. Yet, the student experience is no longer the same level as before, therefore, the cost should not be the same. This is whilst the HE sector are reiterating that tuition fees are remaining as standard due to the fact teaching is still being delivered in line with standards.

TA informed the committee that a number of students put forward a complaint that some students had had complaints upheld in relation to the argument that their student experience was damaged, therefore they should be compensated.

SW asked to see if the Union could be provided with details regarding which students were compensated so that the team can identify the justification for compensation.

TA clarified that they were unsure how far the complaint was taken and as to whether compensation was formally made.

Action: TA to speak with NF regarding an update on the student complaint process regarding the damage of COVID to the student experience and possible compensation

TA expressed that there was no identification of the individual challenges faced by international students.

AOO expressed that this is not the first time international students have been looked over. AOO reiterated that pressure needs to be placed on the different challenges faced by international students than UK (home) students.

SW asked how engaged the Sabbatical team were on NUS' stance on tuition fees.

SW stated that it will be beneficial if the Sabbatical team engage with national contacts and resource to see if NUS and/or any national bodies are leading on campaigns regarding student tuition fees.

Action: AOO to reach out to contacts and carry out research to see if any national campaigns are to be run regarding the student fee stance.

Action: GC to create a working group to ensure further discussions take place.

10. COVID Update

SW provided an update regarding the University Silver Team update.

SW informed the team that the Government are now taking ownership over the decision making regarding whether Universities will be forced to move all teaching online.

AOO informed the committee that Salford are in a positive position, to prepare for a scenario that is similar to Manchester and MMU.

SW continued to provide clarity regarding COVID positive tests in the Manchester City area.

SW reiterated RR's points of concern that need to be addressed by the University:

RR questioned how the student experience is still to be run. Is it inline with government standards e.g. for sports and societies to take place? Also, how do we continue to engage with students through normal channels if further lockdown measures are to put in place?

JW put forward a question as to what happens if students from previous year groups are struggling to catch up on either completing placement or finishing modules when current face-to-face teaching could possibly be affected. Evidently, a backlog of teaching and learning will take place.

Overall discussions from the group resulted in confusion if all face-to-face teaching would take place, or if in-person tutorial and practical teaching would continue e.g. physiotherapy, OT, nursing etc.

Action: JW to speak with NW regarding clarity on what the possibly effects of further lockdown measures could have on practical and technical courses within the school

SW asked if any other academic schools had similar documents to the Session Impact document from the B&L School.

SW highlighted that it would be important to raise a question to ADAs why certain courses have been put entirely online. It will be worth then speaking with School and Course reps to develop feedback from programmes that are now online.

11. Partnership Steering Group

JW and AOO agreed that the meeting itself was a positive one.

TA asked if the Sabbatical team had the opportunity to update on objectives.

AOO informed the committee that those updates and support would be placed in different committees.

SW reiterated that the focus should be on allowing appropriate amounts of time in the meetings for certain agenda items to be discussed appropriately.

TA will ensure that appropriate time in Union Exec can be used prior the agenda planning meeting with NF, so areas of concern are raised with appropriate time.

12. Accommodation Concerns: International Students

AOO and AO led on the discussion for international student support regarding accommodation concerns.

AO expressed the four major concerns that international students are experiencing when signing up for accommodation in the UK.

AO did further research into the information on the AskUs website regarding the concerns for international students. Such concerns are:

- The substantial cost for guarantor form for international students
- Accommodation costs for international students are far too expensive
- Most accommodation options are shared housing and therefore, not applicable for families and it is not cost efficient if students need to confirm more than one room.
- Temporary accommodation for students who are experiencing troubles in finding accommodation could be £34 per night. This is not feasible for students.

AOO agreed with the comments made by AO but expressed that we now need to identify the solutions that the Union can provide to these issues.

SW expressed to the committee that we must identify what the *realistic* changes are that we can feasibly make. Such issues as paying deposits in advance are a national issue for all students and therefore are unrealistic obstacles to tackle from Salford SU.

SW put forward that a piece of work must be created to identify what the impact of such issues are, to see if we can realistically make change on certain issues international students are facing.

SW expressed caution in ensuring we focus efforts on what we can realistically change.

AO put forward that better information should be provided to international students before searching for accommodation.

SW stated that there could possibly be a community engagement project that would encourage landlords in the local area to rent to students.

TA asked if there was a way of staggering the payment period for international students which would make it more cost effective.

AO put forward the thoughts as to whether the University could influence the accommodation providers.

Action: GC to organise a campaign planning session with AO

13. Academic Regulations Committee Update

SC was not present to provide an update.

14. Proposal Document: Academic Schools and Sabbatical Objectives

This agenda item has now been addressed.

15. AOB

AOO asked to involve VOs with Union Exec to ensure we are engaging the officers in Union processes and Sabbatical Objectives, to ensure they feel a part of the team.

Action: TA and AOO to meet with GC regarding VO engagement with Union Exec