

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

Union Assembly Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held **Tuesday 31 January 2023**

Present:

Full-time Officers		
Callum Slater	VP Union Development	He/Him
Noah Katz	VP Education	They/Them
Danny Goodwin	VP Societies	He/Him
Megan Homburg	VP Sport	She/Her
India Ellis	President	She/Her
Liberation-campaign Officers		
Alvin Ngo	Racial & Ethnic Minority Officer	He/Him
Josh Newsham	LGBTQ+ Students Officer	He/Him
Cerys Evans	Students With Disabilities Officer	She/Her
Union Assembly Delegate		
Amy Stanning	-	She/Her
Thomas Cross	-	
Eabha Lynn	-	She/Her
Becca Knott	-	She/Her
Harry Wrench	-	He/Him
Observers		
Chris Cottam	Advocacy and Governance Manager	He/Him
Frank Longdon	Student Insight & Voice Manager	He/Him
Josh Wynn	Democracy & Governance Assistant	He/Him

Apologies: Vic Phillips

Agenda Item 1 | Introductions

Welcomes from the chair. Explaining the format of how today is going to work. Acknowledging that this venue is not ideal and will look at times and dates going forward as we don't want to exclude any members.

Apologies.

Agenda Item 2 | Approval of New Union Bye-Laws

The new bye-laws have been circulated through teams and require formal ratification through Union Assembly and there is scope within the UA to amend these at a later date.

It was raised by Noah that bye-law 8 students group academic rep section has not been updated yet so will need to be amended at a later date.

There was also asked for clarification around whether the chair has the casting vote as there was a worry of potential deadlock. The was clarified by observers that they do not have casting vote and by nature of UA it should be a consensus so UA should come to a decision.
Chair puts ratification of bye-laws to a vote.

ALL in favour

Agenda Item 3 | Induction into Union Assembly

Chris has pulled out the key information which we will go through now. Explained what Union assembly is and where it sits within the students union. What the makeup of it is and what documents govern the operation of UA.

Explaining what the powers of assembly are, as delegates you are here to represent the voice of students. Core piece UA is able to do is to set policy and is noted that a referenda or a general meeting can overrule UA. Make and amend byelaws and to receive reports from trustees.

The byelaws set out further core powers such as debating current issues affecting students.

You don't have to remember everything all documents are available on teams and for the people that take on chair and deputy chair will get extra training around these roles.

Explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the election chairs and deputy chairs.

Explanation of the how members can add items onto the agenda.

It is noted that this is a learning process and this can be amended where needed.

Explanation of all the sub-committees of UA and the powers they have with and explanation that UA can establish more sub-committees.

It was raised how does UA define investigation, which was clarified by Chris as a topic that UA want to look further into and not an individual.

Explanation on how to write a motion. Lots of staff support will be given with writing a motion.

Apologies should be sent in advance of the meeting to the chair.

Explanation of the timeline for sharing minutes and agendas before a meeting.

Assembly will find it's feet with any new model it will take time, you really have the ability to make change and make a positive impact.

It was raised whether LCOs are still held accountable by their forums in this model. This was clarified that they are still held accountable by their forums but also LCOs are mandated to write reports at least once a term. Cerys also added that in the bye-laws there is more accountability to the LCOs

Amy, you mentioned transparency.

It was also raised that people aren't going to come to a meeting if they not informed, so we will provide detail for them to effectively engage in that.

Agenda Item 4 | Election of Chair

Nominations open for election chair.

Thomas nominated themselves.

ALL IN FAVOUR

Agenda Item 5 | Election of Deputy-Chair

Nominations open for deputy-chair.

Eabha nominated themselves.

ALL IN FAVOUR

Agenda Item 6 | FTO Reports

FTO reports have been circulated but has been noted that it was short notice so might not have been read. Those reports are submitted on an individual basis. For the first one we have approached it in different ways, it might be worth discussing creating a format.

Questions are opened about the reports.

Thomas, questions to India, you're working on the giving money back FTO society scheme, how is the cost of living support going to be distributed and questions about the UCU strikes.

India, it stemmed from a senior member of staff shocked it wasn't happening, so how that would work so if the student group had booked out the bar for that event the money would go back to that student group. This makes sense for us to launch this in term 3 due to extrav and welcome week. For instance, JCR deliver the people for these events however they do not receive any of it. It will be very specific to the event.

Cost of living stuff, the money that comes to the SU is split between free food events and pantry stuff. The free food events are currently happening regularly. £500 allocated. The pantry is currently in the process of getting some extra support with student staff creating more jobs. This money also goes into the colleges through free food events and hardship funds. The low fund has been doubled and more staff have been allocated to help with that. The proposal form has re-opened so our main focus is more student staff role.

I'll comment on the UCU later on the agenda

Thomas, question to Noah what assessment forms have reforms have happened?

Noah, University have hired a grade 7 and grade 9 to work on it, in the first phase 1.5 million funding for. Make the curriculum more inclusive, bunched assessments, bunched deadlines, introducing reading weeks to all students. It's a 7-year plan.

Thomas, question to Danny, my friend they are trying to start a society they have reached a max number.

Danny, we do currently have operational members of staff pit falls at the moment, but we would love to. We are at capacity and spread so thin, we want to fully support our societies and don't want to make false promises. Once we have capacity we will.

Thomas, so ready for freshers?

Danny, I don't want to make any promises, but I would imagine it will be sorted by then.

Thomas, in house finance how's that going?

Danny, it has been pending the resources to properly do it, and we are supporting societies independently with their bank issues. It is on pause

Danny, It has been noted by auditors outside bank accounts is a risk. Pending legality, we want more societies, but we don't currently have the support.

Thomas, question to Callum In your report it said you deal with stagecoach in your capacity, do you think the buses will be less bad?

Cal, that isn't embedded as part of my role it fell into my role due to sustainability, just yesterday I have delegated some of that responsibility to the rest of the team. In the short term India is going to share that responsibility. We are not happy with the services; our bargaining power is quite slim and they have a monopoly on the area and they have been tough to negotiate with. Especially the initial interactions as an assembly it might be worth to see if more drastic action should be taken. The other area is service improvement they always play the card they don't have enough drivers. Luckily the Uni is very much on our side. There is a debate happening this week meeting stagecoach. Would love to see a buy in from UA on this as just me on my own.

Thomas, With the 5-year strategy plan, who's going to be a part of that.

Cal, I can't pre-empt too much on this as I am planning this on Friday, my appetite is to include as many people as possible, so will include as many students as possible including UA and staff. Do I have confidence in the feasibility of it, there are challenges to it however we have been lacking this for a few years so will take some resource and I have taken this as one of my main priorities which I will push to the end of my time.

Thomas, you had central reform in your manifesto, a brand change how will that help?

Cal, lots of things in my manifesto wasn't thrashed out, when new information comes to light it's good to adapt. In terms of priorities, it's not the students priorities so that's why it has been dropped. This is an ongoing look at the commercial services re branding and try and relate our services back to the SU.

Amy, question to the officers, the issue of sexual misconduct and behaviour on campus, the OFS set out how they should get their house in order. Uni haven't responded effectively, have the union officers been involved in those discussions?

India, at present no, this is something that came up in our meetings today with directly working with OFS, as a team it is something we have discussed and want to be a part of. It's something we haven't done yet but want to do and hold the university accountable.

Amy, question to Noah you anything to say on anything on the quality of content in teaching?

Noah, TEF Teaching excellence framework, it's a piece quality assurance in higher England has us do. For the first time they have included student submission we had to condense down into 10 page. It's an independent report the Uni didn't see it before it was uploaded. There was nothing that was included that should shock anyone.

Agenda Item 7 | UCU Strike Action

From tomorrow the UCU is starting their 18 day strikes, also there is a marking boycott potentially happening in April. As an FTO team we wanted to get an indication to what you want the SU stance to be.

Discussion from a student group perspective, want some guidance on how to support strikes, so there way an appetite for an acknowledgement and choose a side. Clubs in the past have encouraged students not to come on campus, during a cost-of-living strike, as an SU I don't think we should be pushing it onto students and shouldn't sway students whether should not come onto campus. From a forum's perspective they offer safe spaces on campus, and it is our main objective whether there is strikes or not. It was raised there are plans for comms to go out, what we need from this group is what stance we should take. Other SU's have distinguished between strike action and the boycott. It was discussed that students have supported strike action in previous referendums and that it is vital we differentiate between strikes and industrial action.

It was raised in discussion that student exams and assessments are not marked it will affect graduating students not allowing them to graduate. Several students have expressed their concern how it will affect their grades, gaining on knowledge as a result of missed teaching. There does seem to be a support for the action. But not in the way they will be doing it.

It was mentioned letter templates is something we discussed last time around striking, UA to be a part of the discussion we can produce material for that. In informing people on the strikes, potential collab events, open forum events, for students come and ask the questions about the strikes. Your average student won't actually know what's going on.

A discussion was had around the communications that Union Assembly wanted to put out and the result of that discussion can be read here: <https://lancastersu.co.uk/articles/lusu-union-assembly-statement-on-ucu-strikes>

Actions -> SU Provide template letters – India

Actions -> Engage with UCU on teach out events – India

Actions -> SU should facilitate study groups – Noah

Actions -> Educating students on the reasons for striking and what they can do - Operational

Actions -> To share comms in the teams channel - Frank

Agenda Item 8 | Any Other Business

It was discussed that it is LGBTQ+ history month and members were invited to join in the events happening over the month.