

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE | Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 13 October 2020 [via Teams]****Ex-officio members present**

Atree Ghosh | VP Union Development | Chair [He/Him]  
 Oliver Robinson | SU President [He/Him]  
 Paul McCarthy | VP Sport [He/Him]  
 Amy Merchant | VP Welfare [She/Her]  
 Bee Morgan | VP Education [She/Her]  
 Shannon McCaul | VP Media & Societies [She/Her] | joined the meeting later

**Members present**

India Ellis | College JCR Representative and Vice-Chair [She/Her]  
 Fabiha Askari | Faculty Rep Taught [She/Her]  
 Molly Lawson | Students with Disabilities Officer [She/Her]  
 Jesse Phillips | LGBTQ+ Officer [They/Them]  
 Amy Stanning | Postgraduate and Mature Students' Officer [She/Her] | joined the meeting later  
 Max Kafula | BAME Students' Officer [He/Him]  
 Yu Hong Goh | International Students' Officer [She/Her]  
 Charlotte John | PGR Rep [She/Her]  
 Fay Whittam | Interim Women+ Officer [She/Her]  
 Emma Gardiner | PG Board Chair [She/Her]

**In attendance**

Chris Cottam | Education & Support Unit Manager and Chair's Aide [He/Him]  
 Misbah Ashraf | Interim Chief Executive [She/Her]  
 Veronica Longmire | Executive Administrator | [transcribed the minutes from the recording]

Due to COVID-19 the meeting was held via Microsoft Teams and recorded for the purposes of the minutes, with no objections raised. The Chair welcomed and thanked members for attending the first meeting of the Michaelmas term

**Agenda Item 1 | Apologies** | none.

**Agenda Item 2 | Matters arising** | paper for discussion under Any Other Business.

**Agenda Item 3 | Items for Approval****3.1 Transparency and Clarity in Publicity surrounding Officers**

The paper submitted by the LGBTQ+ Officer was taken as read. It was noted that from discussion with all officers it had become apparent that a number of students did not understand what was meant when officers' work was publicised and referred to as 'FTOs and PTOs'.

The request was made that in order to improve transparency officers' full titles should be used, noting that it would require a policy adaptation and was within the power of the Executive Committee.

Discussion ensued around the use of acronyms | the belief it was the wrong time to make changes due to the review currently underway and time taken to make such changes was time missed on campaigning for students.

A friendly amendment to **remove** point 2.1.3 of the paper was proposed based on the belief that acronyms would always be used and the use of full titles was potentially not workable. The amendment was accepted and a vote taken to 'approve the paper with the accepted amendment'. The paper was approved unanimously.

**3.2 Proxy Voting Arrangements**

The paper submitted by the VP Union Development and Chair of this committee was taken as read noting that the committee was being asked to allow proxy voting by inserting the following under Section 3 of the Executive Committee by-laws to read:

*3.4 Executive Committee meetings will accept proxy voting for an Item of Approval.*

*3.4.1 Prior notice of proxy voting must be given in writing to the Chair before an Executive Committee meeting –this must include who is voting on your behalf and on what issues (single topic that is to be approved, or all topics to be approved)*

*3.4.2 In the use of proxy voting, quoracy for a meeting may be reduced to 25% (rounded up to the nearest whole number), granted that votes from at least 50% members are available.*

A minor concern was raised on the potential to set a precedent of non-attendance at meetings | accountability measures | amendment proposed to delete point 3.4.2 [**not accepted as a friendly amendment**] | striving to be more accessible but being mindful that some will have other commitments, eg caring responsibilities.

A further amendment [**accepted as friendly**] was put forward to the effect that

*'proxy voting should not be used as a substitute and attendance at meetings was expected in line with commitment to their role and procedures in place'*

The paper, with the accepted friendly amendment, was taken to a vote and **approved unanimously**.

The agenda was re-ordered at this point to take the next agenda item.

### 3.3 Student Welfare in Isolation

It was noted in the report that the media had reported that approximately 1000 students in Lancaster were either in isolation or in quarantine and that it was clear these students were not being treated consistently or fairly.

The Committee was being recommended to approve the following:

1. *That the Executive Committee commits the Union to ensuring that student welfare is maintained during the immediate crisis, taking forward the substantive proposals outlined in this report.*

*That the committee note the following:*

1. *The national context in which we are operating is inconsistent and government activity is capricious, corrupt, and irresponsibly; failing catastrophically to address the current crisis.*
2. *The University has been unable to effectively implement many of its otherwise fine plans and students are suffering as a result. We are a triple top ten university and should seek to maintain a high-quality experience for all our students.*

It was further noted that: the document had been continuously evolving up to the point of being brought to the meeting | Part-time Officers had raised issues that students self-isolating / in quarantine were facing | the need to ensure that student welfare was maintained during the current crisis | the paper submitted was in three sections: Food – Sanitation – Mental Well-being | mental well-being was raised at every meeting attended | there should be more affordable options for students self-isolating | the University, in the short term, increasing its counselling capacity | constant promotion of the SU Advice Centre | that everyone should receive support including minority and international students..

Points made included: the fact guidance was being announced on an almost daily basis | the government's constant change of direction | students unable to access the support systems | the Union providing free food to students who need it and considering more affordable options | potential videos and Q&A sessions for international students | issues around sanitation.

Discussion then moved to teaching issues and the fact there was no alternative to face-to-face teaching for those isolating themselves, immuno-compromised and those shielding to protect others. The proposal put forward was to call upon the University to offer an alternative to face-to-face teaching across the board, by live-streaming ideally, recording of lectures and offer academic support potentially via the academic tutor system | departments reaching out to students | students self-isolating should not be missing out.

At this point it was believed a steer from the committee should be forthcoming as to its expectations of the paper | what needed to be put in place in order to be clear what was being asked of staff and the Union as a whole

Points raised included: that from a teaching aspect there was a need to find the gaps and balance between the ideal and the realistic | ascertaining which departments were failing to reach out | with whom the responsibility lay | focussing on the education side first and revisiting the other issues raised later | considering the perspective of PG research students | the University not having the infrastructure or resources to connect online and face-to-face teaching | no definitive answer as to what to press for | no quality of education for students jumping between face-to-face and online learning | the potential for staggered approach in time thus giving students time to transition | that face-to-face teaching should go on for as long as possible | the importance of mental well-being for students and staff.

Further information was given around the delay in the release of the Sage report which stated that Universities should be teaching on-line for the first term and Lancaster not being in favour of this | the data published on the University website not being true to life | the national context | was there an appetite to defend blended teaching when it was likely to move to on-line | what would this mean for clubs, groups and societies | the need to be realistic and pragmatic.

The Chair wished to raise a point that at the beginning of the meeting the paper was looking at the gaps in the current system for students self-isolating and address those issues with the University to fill that gap. If there was to be a change of direction saying that on-line teaching was the preference from a safety point of view but where would that leave sports clubs and societies who have physical training sessions, activities etc.

Questions / points raised via the meeting chat line included, for the purposes of the minutes, what was not working relating to blended teaching | the issue of self-isolation context of online learning needed to be resolved over the coming weeks | the major risk to mental health and other issues if there was the move to online teaching only | there were currently 1000 students off campus who were self-isolating thus making the issue more widespread | they had not had

any face-to-face teaching at all | lecturers were trying hard to ensure online teaching was equal or better than face-to-face. However lecturers were concerned that this was not succeeding and that teaching staff were 'burning out' trying to teach to a quality ideal.

Students need quality online teaching and would be in favour of all online teaching if both the technology and support systems were in place for teaching staff. It was believed that if exact issues around blended learning were highlighted there would possibly be more support and a greater chance of success.

There was general support for further research | wider student consultation on face-to-face teaching | in the interests of safety for students and staff to campaign for online education.

A committee member then gave an insight into their recent learning experience stating that they had attended three face-to-face seminars and in one provision was made for students self-isolating in as much as this was via an I-pad through Teams. The feedback was that it worked in some parts but not in others but this was due to the seminar discussion. One seminar did not make provision for those unable to attend, meaning that if there were any students unable to be there they had missed out. Those present had felt comfortable as the seminars were in large, well-ventilated rooms and each person took the precaution to sanitise their hands and desks. The perspective was that there was no significant degree of risk. There was the belief that if a move to exclusively online learning this would pose more of a risk to mental health / well-being. It was further believed that the issue to focus on was well-being, support for students, call for equality of access and for the Union to concentrate on aspects it was well-positioned to do regarding student welfare.

A further comment was that interactions with human beings were preferable for mental wellbeing and that if possible a blended approach should be offered.

The Chair intervened stating it was clear there was not a consensus to move to online learning and suggested this be taken off the table. It was further suggested that the Union focus on undertaking research, consulting with students and contacting the University to ascertain what part of blended learning was not working. Also, to research the issues / success on a department by department basis and focus on welfare and other support systems that could be offered.

Further points raised included: a better experience for international students | accessibility | wellbeing | staff involvement from the point of approval of the paper | concern, from the welfare perspective, around pushing for online learning without student consultation | publicising the potential for free food boxes from the Union | working on a campaign with liberation officers | potential connection with the University and colleges | encouraging students to inform the University if they have the virus or symptoms.

It was noted that as well as food boxes, hygiene boxes were also to be available for students isolating and funding had been confirmed for these.

Discussion on the paper was concluded | that further informal discussions could take place with a view to amending the document | education would be the focus of further research.

#### **Agenda Item 4 | Items for Information**

##### **Updates from Interim Chief Executive | Full-Time Officers | Part-time Officers**

Information to be circulated via social media / emails / circulation of papers / officers to contact relevant person if necessary.

#### **Agenda Item 5 | Any Other Business**

- 5.1 It was noted that although the Cancel the Curfew had become defunct due to the government restrictions, in order of good governance and minutes purposes: 8 voted For | 4 voted Against and 3 Abstained. The motion had passed.
- 5.2 It was reported that the governance process had been completed as regards the new Postgraduate and Mature Students forum [originally the Mature Students Forum].