# Scrutiny Report of Oliver Robinson

## January 2021

*Oliver Robinson, current President at Lancaster University Students’ Union, was interviewed by two members of the Union’s Scrutiny Panel (Nathan Shoesmith and Maria Avram) on 13 January 2021. This interview and other information researched and supplied to the Scrutiny Panel forms the basis of the following Scrutiny Report.*

*While acknowledging a change in circumstances during the Coronavirus pandemic, this report refers to the manifesto provided by Oliver ahead of the 2020 Students’ Union Officer Elections, a copy of which can be found* [*here.*](https://lancastersu.co.uk/resources/president-2020-21-manifesto/download_attachment)

*The Scrutiny Panel have gone to reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy of information included in this report at the time of publication.*

**Education During COVID-19**

In his manifesto, Oliver pledged to do all he can to ensure that students get as close to the full student experience as possible and that our degree isn’t devalued by doing it during a pandemic. His ability to do so was limited as the University Management Advisory group was abolished. The Panel recognises that this was not his decision and is hopeful that he will be able to find a solution for this problem in this term. He noted the University’s tendency to react, rather than being proactive in adapting itself to the current restrictions, and as a result, they have not really listened to the SU and their ideas. As a result, Oliver pledged to focus on getting adequate mitigation for students, but this will be difficult given the relationship between the SU and the University. The Panel notes that Oliver’s analysis of what blended learning has meant for students as well as what the effects of returning to face-to-face teaching before it is completely safe shows his ability to engage with issues and look at the consequences of important decisions.

**Democracy**

Oliver identified this area as his most important of the manifesto, as he believes the SU has a democratic deficit. In January, the Union voted to start the drafting a new Article of Association (the core governing documents of the SU), which Oliver hopes will be approved before the next round of elections. As he explained the approval process, it was clear to the Panel that Oliver had a good understanding of how he will manage it, as well as what changes he wants to make. He also outlined changes to the scrutiny process that he would like to implement, which would make it the business of the Union Council, which he believes would make it easier to hold officers accountable, as they will have more knowledge of the work the Union is doing.

He also plans to change the way student trustees are appointed by ensuring that student trustees are elected so as to have a majority on the Trustee Board. He also wants all external trustees to be ratified by the student body, rather than by the executive committee, the idea behind that being that students have the final say over all members of the trustee board. Oliver outlined the long process by which he reached this model, and the Panel believes that he was meticulous and considered many possibilities before arriving at this one.

**Student Media Freedom**

Oliver told us that he wished to work on his manifesto pledges regarding this more in the future.

**Climate Emergency**

One of Oliver’s proposals when it comes to addressing the Climate Emergency is to include it in the duties of the Union Development Officer, rather than the Welfare Officer. The panel considered that this may be good in improving the extent to which the issues around the Climate Emergency can be explored.

**Transparency and Communication**

Oliver viewed this area as both his weakest and his strongest, as he believes that his communication is clear and easy to understand, but he admitted that he doesn’t always remember to use social media to update the students on what the SU is doing. Social media in general is definitely a weakness for Oliver, and the Panel agrees with his assessment that, in order to maintain transparency, he should be more active and should join platforms such as Instagram, that students use more regularly.

**Overview**

Overall, the panel considers that Oliver has delivered, or made his best efforts to deliver on the promises set out in his manifesto. Oliver clearly communicates well and professionally with students, though greater consistency over this, including response times, could be desired and we believe he is keen to work towards this.