



Union Assembly Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held: **TUESDAY 14th MAY 2024, 3PM – 6PM**

Agenda Item 1| Introductions

Minutes of meeting 12/03/24: [Union Assembly Minutes 12.03.24.docx](#)

In attendance: Cerys Evans, Sam Hedges, Santi Siabato, Jack Watson, Harrison Stewart, Josh Newsham, Thomas Cross, Kinga Kupi, Luke Owen, Ollie Earnshaw, Rory O’Ceallaigh, Shlok Sagar, Adam Bucknall, Rebecca Spiers, Maceik Marcinkiewicz, Charlie Seddon, Frankie Lynch-Brown, Matthew Lamb.

Apologies: Luke Donlan, Madison Lardner, Sowmya Chandupatla, Vakare Kuodyte, Huseyn Guliyev.

Chair (Matt Murphy) introduced themselves and opened the meeting.
Apologies were noted.

Josh Newsham – there were comments on the minutes, some technical concerns that need to be dealt with outside of the meeting.

Vote was taken to amend minutes digitally outside of the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 2 | For Discussion | Full-Time Officer Reports

President: [Union Assembly FTO Report - President 14.05.24.docx](#)

Cerys Evans presented the report and explained that they are currently undertaking exams. Cerys explained the need to balance the demands of their existing and new manifesto from their re-election.

Sam Hedges – good luck in your exams, you are doing really well

VP Education: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Education 14 05 24.docx](#)

Sam Hedges presented their report and explained the change in the structure, to move away from reporting on their manifesto aims – as they have achieved them all. Sam discussed the approval of the self-certifications policy and handover with the incoming Education Officer.

No questions.

VP Societies & Media: report not submitted

Santi Siabato shared their report with Union Assembly shortly before the meeting: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Societies & Media 14.05.24.docx](#)

Santi presented their report, thanked Societies Committee for their support with Societies Awards, and discussed their work on cost of living and re-opening of society affiliations. Briefings on society affiliations have gone well and handbook has been well received.

No questions.

VP Sport: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Sport 14.05.24.docx](#)

Jack Watson presented their report and stated their hope that everyone enjoyed Roses. Jack thanked everyone who made Roses happen.

Luke Owen – College Presidents would like to express their disappointment in the announced changes to Division 3 football fixtures.

Jack Watson – the changes to Division 3 were discussed three times. It brings us in-line with other leagues. It is an intermural league.

Rory O’Ceallaigh – Colleges do not feel they have been involved at all in this decision. We wanted it noted that Colleges are not happy to have no involvement in this decision.

Jack Watson – decision was taken at Sports Committee, which includes members from College Sport

Rory O’Ceallaigh – could I ask who is on Sports Committee? We don’t know who our representatives are.

Luke Owen – how can there be efficient representation if we can’t contact them?

Jack Watson – it has been discussed by representatives of College Sport on Sports Committee. Committee did note that we are discussing relegation in Division 3 of College men’s football and that this discussion took time away from conversations about other sport, including women’s football. I’m happy to sit down with College Presidents to discuss the decision.

Matthew Lamb – over the Roses weekend KFC ran out of chicken and buses were overcrowded. How did you deal with the effect of Roses on the local community?

Jack Watson – we had a conversation with Roses, there are a lot of vendors on campus for food.

Cerys Evans – given the size of the event, the local Council are involved.

Josh Newsham – you’ve done an amazing job

Luke Owen – both men’s College football and women’s football are both important issues

Sam Hedges – from the point of view as someone involved in student media, they were very thankful for your support and the last minute commentators you helped find. Student media send a big thank you for your support for Roses Live.

VP Union Development: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Union Development 14.05.24.docx](#)

Harrison Stewart presented their report and noted that the Carbon Audit report is now complete.

No questions.

VP Welfare: [Union Assembly FTO Report - VP Welfare 14.05.24.docx](#)

Josh Newsham presented their report and provided further updates. Josh raised the new Gender Expression Fund and thanked the LGBTQ+ Forum for their support. We have had to spend a lot of time lobbying for funding for Supper Club and the Pantry as we do not have secure funding. Josh has been working to create an annual funding plan with the University to provide more security for LUSU's cost of living provisions. Josh updated Union Assembly on the encampment in Alexandra Square in support of Palestine. Josh explained the past actions of the Students' Union to support freedom of speech and students' safety surrounding the debates related to the conflict. Josh is writing to University Council to explain the situation and make it clear the intentions of the campaign. Josh has released a statement in support of students' campaigns. From their meetings with the encampment, Josh has been impressed by the positive community atmosphere created.

Sam Hedges – a big thank you to Josh, he is working really hard to protect and advocate for students. What you are doing is incredible. You have put in-place very respectful boundaries and support measures for the protesters.

Appendix 1 | For Information | FTO Expenditure: [UA Paper - FTO Expenses 14.05.24.docx](#)

Cerys Evans presented the appendix and invited members to speak to them if they had any questions.

Agenda Item 3 | For Approval | Plant-Based Universities Petition

Oliver Mulcahy, Victoria Simpson, Faye Rennie, Benjamin Carter

Petition: <https://lancastersu.co.uk/thestudentvoice/plant-based-universities>

Oliver Mulcahy, Victoria Simpson, Faye Rennie, and Benjamin Carter provided a short presentation in support of their petition: [PBU slides .pptx](#)

Josh Newsham – well done, this is the first petition we've had to Union Assembly. How accessible would this change be for autistic students with sensory issues around food?

Faye Rennie – we want to make space for students to advocate for their own needs.

Victoria Simpson – it is about shifting institutional norms

Student – I don't think this is tenable option for those with dietary needs that disallow people from following a vegan diet such a diabetes and IBS. A lot of the University-led provisions on-campus are often the affordable options. As a staff member, a lot of staff don't have the opportunity to engage. I would suggest an acceptance with an amendment to not reach complete 100% adoption.

Victoria Simpson – research has shown that a plant-based diet can reverse type-2 diabetes. Plant-based diet could mean significant savings for the NHS.

Student (MOK) – a lot of people who use catering on-campus such as children and staff don't have a stake in this decision.

Victoria Simpson – not necessarily an unattractive offer for children, just removing meat and dairy.

Oliver Mulcahy – it is cheaper to follow a plant-based diet. We aren't asking people to follow a plant-based diet.

Benjamin Carter – we need to have this dialogue, I do acknowledge accessibility of food options does need to be addressed as it does anyway.

Student – I have a friend who would not be able to eat plant-based. I am not saying I hate this, but there needs to be some leeway for not everything being plant-based.

Faye Rennie – you raise a really good point about engaging families.

Victoria Simpson – it is important to include the views of as many as possible. It is worth considering that most marginalised people will be affected by climate change.

Sam Hedges – this petition would action the Students' Union to lobby the University to change their catering offer. It would not change overnight.

Luke Owen – to what degree of compromise would you agree to in a meeting with the University?

Oliver Mulcahy – we'd be proud of any change toward plant-based but we can't be happy with anything other 100% to tackle climate change. Where we are more lenient is the time it takes to reach 100%.

Luke Owen – I feel the general consensus is in agreement but around the magnitude of the change. It might be worth coming back to Union Assembly throughout the project.

Victoria Simpson – hearing these voices and continuing the dialogue is important. We can say to the University that this is serious issue and is in-line with University policies.

Cerys Evans – is this giving work to the Students' Union or is this a project that is led by you as a group on behalf of the Students' Union?

Benjamin Carter – as a group of students, we are eager to deliver. If there was an elected position we would run for it.

Cerys Evans – I am a big fan of the 50% check, 80% check with Union Assembly. What we agree needs to match what you want. It feels that if you have a function group, we should just support you.

Harrison Stewart – we have space in Green Lancaster to support this campaign group.

Victoria Simpson – other Universities have climate and sustainability committees.

Matthew Lamb – meat is a big part of many international food cultures. How effective will this be?

Oliver Mulcahy – I think it would be very effective. What changes like this do create a new social norm. The campaign itself only starts getting bigger across the UK and USA.

Collectively makes a big impact.

Victoria Simpson – culturally the meat diet is heavily influenced by colonialism. 65% of people globally struggle to digest dairy. There is no religion that mandates consumption of meat, The largest group adopting plant-based diets in the USA is the Afro-American community.

Benjamin Carter – this would not ban the sale of meat in the LUSU shop.

Ollie Earnshaw – Warwick went 50% plant based via a student vote. Are you looking to pursue that?

Victoria Simpson – this is the future, we can be ahead of the curve. It needs to be a gradual and realistic transition. We aim for the 100%.

Benjamin Carter – we are confident of popular student support

Luke Owen – it might be easier to pass for more vegan options to then review at a later date

Sam Hedges – a few things we could do as a Union Assembly

Cerys Evans – is there general support?

Vote on general idea of petition:

FOR 18

AGAINST 1

ABSTAIN 0

Sam Hedges – could we look at stages 1 and 2 of the plan.

Luke Owen – could we include a test phase so we could get some figures.

Rory O’Ceallaigh – would require the University to comply

Cerys Evans – if we believe in this campaign and this campaign group we could say we support the campaign and hand it over to the group. If we want more check-ins and set the frequency of updates. It would be good to create some timeframes. The work that is most effective is the financial planning work. We could support stage one and two over one or two years. Or we can say we support up to 50%, then see where we are. This will end with a statement from a Full-Time Officer.

Frankie Lynch-Brown – I am not happy with vote to support up to 50%, as it lets University off. We should review after stage 2 and not leave these guys stranded after 50%.

Josh Newsham – just because we support 100%, it doesn’t mean measures can’t be put in-place for those who cannot follow a plant-based diet. For those in University accommodation, they could receive catering from a private provider. We could vote in support but ensure adjustments are put in place.

Harrison Stewart – where there has been backlash elsewhere it has been about accessibility. No northern University has said they are going 100% yet. We can make systemic change at a national-level. The science tells us 50% isn’t enough.

Luke Owen – how wise is lobbying for 100%?

Harrison Stewart – it will be difficult, but that shouldn’t discourage us.

Benjamin Carter – we need the full mandate from you as the University is likely to cut us in negotiations.

Victoria Simpson – there are lots of staff trying to push for this too.

Sam Hedges – if Union Assembly want to back this wholeheartedly it would give the campaign a strong footing in discussions with the University.

Adam Bucknall – at this point all the science is in agreement, the first two stages are what we should approve.

Luke Owen – I think that is sensible

Josh Newsham – over 150 students have come together to sign a petition in support of this. It would be a risk to us, if we turn around to try and dilute the petition.

Vote to support the petition and Plant-Based Universities campaign:

FOR 18

AGAINST 1

ABSTAIN 0

Chair asked Union Assembly to agree review points with the campaign group in the future.

Cerys Evans – what would you like to do?

Benjamin Carter – we can liaise with a Full-Time Officer and arrange reports to Union Assembly.

Cerys Evans – we could agree that we would like a report at the end of stage 2.

Sam Hedges – we could connect this to the sustainability portfolio with the new Officer Team. Union Assembly would then get update in FTO Report.

Vote for report after stage 2 and link to the Full-Time Officer sustainability portfolio:

FOR 19

AGAINST 0

ABSTAIN 0

Union Assembly took a 5 minute break.

Agenda Item 4 | For Approval | Trans Rights Policy

Josh Newsham, VP Welfare

Paper: [Trans Rights Policy.docx](#)

Josh Newsham presented the policy and noted the work of Thomas Cross (LGBTQ+ Officer) and Olive Truman (LGBTQ+ Forum, Trans Wellbeing Officer) in its development. Josh explained the social and societal need for the policy and the need to shift this work from the LGBTQ+ Forum to the Union as a whole.

Olive Truman introduced themselves and their role in organising Trans+ events within the LGBTQ+ Forum. Olive shared feedback from trans students on toilets, feelings of safety, intersectional microaggressions, and access to services in the University and Students' Union. Lots of students spoke about issues with pronouns and deadnaming in societies, particularly in dance. The gendered changing spaces for sports and dance was also an issue, as was cyberbullying targeted at trans students.

Thomas Cross thanked Olive and Josh for their work in consulting students in the development of the policy.

No questions.

Vote:

FOR 17

AGAINST 0

ABSTAIN 1

Policy is approved.

Maceij Marcinkiewiwc left. Jack Watson passed their pre-emptive votes to Cerys Evans.

Agenda Item 5 | For Approval | Strike Action Plan Policy

Sam Hedges, VP Education

Paper: [Strike Action Plan Policy.docx](#)

Sam Hedges presented the policy and thanked the involvement of election candidates and Harrison Stewart for their involvement in the development of the policy. Sam explained the need for the policy and the interaction with sports and societies activity. Sam also detailed the stipulation for a committee with an Full-Time Officer lead.

Sam explained there had been a proposed change to the wording that he can share after the meeting.

Hannah Bywood – it is important that postgraduate research students are included in the committee

Sam Hedges – that is why we have left it open to all students so we can include the voice of postgraduate researchers. It is a very difficult decision for those students who are often also a member of a trade union.

Matthew Lamb – a few members would like a more concrete idea of how that committee will operate. How will recruitment will happen?

Sam Hedges – I am happy to take guidance on recruitment. I don't think a sign-up sheet would be a bad idea. I would proactively approach some people to engage, particularly postgraduate research students. It could be a good way for students uncomfortable with elections to get involved.

Student – how have you engaged with UCU on the creation of this paper?

Sam Hedges – we have not engaged with them yet. I will be speaking to UCU.

Student – I am a postgraduate research student who is a member of UCU who sat on Union Assembly previously.

Sam Hedges – this was done after your resignation, dates in the paper are incorrect.

Cerys Evans – this paper doesn't need representation as this is to create a working group who will then engage students and other stakeholders. Sam has done a consultation of our internal work, student-facing aspect will come later.

Sam Hedges – this paper lays out work that will come later.

Josh Newsham – during the last strike action, it was really hard for Union Assembly to meet which led an Officer to take action on their behalf. This will allow us to respond to every industrial action appropriately.

Vote:

FOR 18

AGAINST 0

ABSTAIN 0

Policy is approved.

Agenda Item 6 | For Discussion | LCO Absence

Thomas Cross, LGBTQ+ Officer

Paper: [LCO Absence Paper.docx](#)

Thomas Cross asked for the item to be taken as a restricted item. Non-Union Assembly members in present were asked to leave by the Chair.

Thomas Cross presented the paper and explained the concerns with engagement with Union Assembly by the Racial & Ethnic Minorities Officer.

Sam Hedges – can I check that we have been in contact with them?

Josh Newsham – I have tried to stay in contact. It is important that LCOs are active in their own communities. It is also important that there is respect for the democratic functions of the Students' Union and expectations of the role.

Sam Hedges – as a very white-majority Union Assembly, it concerns me how this action will be felt by ethnic minority students.

Charlie Seddon – if my LGBTQ+ Officer was not undertaking the job, I would expect them to be fired.

Santi Siabato – as an ethnic minority, I would like to see someone do that role effectively. We want to see LCOs flourish, this endorses that.

Thomas Cross – this came up in my mind, I also contacted them. This is Term 3, this isn't premature.

Luke Owen – have they been active in their forum?

Josh Newsham – there was one event during Welcome Week in collaboration with the other forums.

Rory O'Ceallaigh – please can we use definition in place of acronyms in future papers.

Thomas Cross – Yes, of course I will. I shouldn't have to bring this up. This either does need to come to Chair, or it needs to go to the staff team or the LCOs.

Josh Newsham – this is part of a wider conversation about where liberation fits into the Union. How do we hold LCOs to account and by what means? The ongoing LCO review is aiming to give a broader picture of LCO's comfort with Union Assembly taking action.

Cerys Evans – this is a symptom of a wider issue. As a Union, because of the conversations about LCO's workload. As an Officer Team, we are aware of issues with engagement but have a culture where we are unwilling to raise it. We are very hesitant to punish anyone. Over past days, we have had people in various roles that do not fulfil their roles who were not held to account. In this case, the approach has been to just leave it and not take any clear action. We do not have a history of passing Vote of No Confidence. We should consider the attitude amongst student more broadly to hold post-holders to account.

Sam Hedges – I have been uncomfortable because of LUSU's history of racism. It is difficult though there is the question of good governance.

Harrison Stewart – there isn't a political stance, it's just governance.

Thomas Cross – it is important as there is no active forum. LCOs have a dual responsibility to their forum and Union Assembly. I can't take this to their forum.

Hannah Bywood – it is great to give LCOs time but this is double the number of meetings required by the Bye-Laws. It is someone who should have been here to represent their forum and who should have.

Thomas Cross – we'd prefer not to vote.

ACTION: Chair actioned to inform the Racial and Ethnic Minorities Officer of their removal from post.

Rebecca Spiers left.

Agenda Item 7 | For Information | Access & Participation Plan Student Submission

Josh Newsham, VP Welfare

Verbal update

Josh Newsham explained the University's Access & Participation Plan and the Student Response. Josh explained the student consultation activity with students, Student Academic Reps, Wellbeing & Inclusion Group, and societies with a stake in the University's widening participation work. Josh invited those present to engage in the project and share their views.

Luke Owen – I would be interested.

Josh Newsham – please drop me a Teams message

Sam Hedges – HEPI have just released a report on the national living standard for students, which is above £18,000. Though the University states that it is £12,000.

Josh Newsham – I am currently lobbying the University raise the threshold for University bursaries. Are we actually advertising the real cost of Uni to students?

Agenda Item 8 | For Approval | Censure Amendment

Thomas Cross, LGBTQ+ Officer

Paper: [Censure Amendment.docx](#)

Thomas Cross presented the amendment. Thomas explained the reasons behind the amendment, the limitations of the proposal, and extension of existing provision across other members of Union Assembly.

Luke Owen – I think we should stick with the requirement for only three members, rather than eight.

Thomas Cross – as Union Assembly becomes more in the public domain, it may be used more frequently.

Student – how does this differ from the Student Code of Conduct

Cerys Evans – a complaint against the Student Code of Conduct requires a complaint and a lengthy investigation. Censure is a slap on the wrist, it allows Union Assembly to publicly disapprove of the actions of someone in the room. This would not impact the Student Code of Conduct. I think we want a slightly higher threshold as with 3 people it could come from within just the Full-Time Officer team. Behaviour at a meeting is not necessarily against the Code of Conduct as I feel we should hold each other to a higher standard.

Student – I feel Officers should be held to a higher standard. It concerns me that no other action has come out of the repeated concerns I have raised.

Thomas Cross – threshold of eight and two-third majority means it won't be abused.

Cerys Evans – it means many groups in Union Assembly can't submit without the support of others.

Luke Owen – I still feel the number needs to be lower. If we all vote anyway, do we need further constraint.

Sam Hedges – I would be more comfortable with six.

Luke Owen – how about three but just let Full-Time Officers to account.

Sam Hedges – the motion here is to allow us to hold others to account for their conduct.

Adam Bucknall – I believe six is more reasonable given current attendance and it gives different groups scope to submit.

Cerys Evans – the idea of this is controversial as we aren't used to this activity. It is an opportunity to formally note the feelings a group may have.

Josh Newsham – what capacity does the Chair have to control the meeting? We should have a culture to call out behaviour.

Luke Owen – noting unhappiness with behaviour will appear in the minutes.

Cerys Evans – a vote for censure is more powerful

Luke Owen – a threshold of eight seems a little redundant if more than two thirds support the motion.

Josh Newsham – it might make people uncomfortable

Luke Owen – if the point is spontaneous it makes it confusing

Santi Siabato – I don't think there should be a barrier. I think six people makes sense. What is the follow-up for a motion of censure?

Cerys Evans – it's pointing something out. Should there be repeated instances, it may lead to more serious action. Censure is about noting the problem.

Thomas Cross – if you have a problem with the threshold, we can debate

Vote:

FOR 13

AGAINST 2

ABSTAIN 1

Policy is approved.

Agenda Item 9 | Any Other Business

Resignation of Postgraduate & Mature Students' Officer

Josh Newsham, VP Welfare

Josh Newsham introduced the matter and invited the former Postgraduate and Mature Students' Officer to speak.

Student – I am very upset. No one has apologised and I am disappointed I didn't get to fulfil my election promises. I whole heartedly discourage everyone from running for LCOs roles in their current form.