**12/05/2021 Student Council Minutes**
 (13:30 – 15:30, held via Zoom)
45 Student Council Members in attendance

1. **Welcome**

Chair welcomes members to the last Student Council for this academic year. Invites members to welcome Nina Anderson-Knox, Head of QuEST who will be answering questions for Senior Management Question Time.

Chair welcomes members to use the Chat function to ask any questions or leave comments during the meeting.

1. **Senior Management Question Time**  *Nina Anderson-Knox is the Head of the QuEST team who make sure that education at UWS is up to standard, and that the student experience is continually improved. As a UWS graduate herself, Nina is passionate about improving the lives of students through education. Nina’s team oversees work such as programme approvals and external reviews of UWS, and student involvement in these processes. Nina welcomes questions about how the quality of your degrees are ensured, how changes such as the recent degree algorithm change are decided, and how student life at UWS is influenced by national decisions.*

Nina introduced herself and thanked members for the invitation.

Q. Member explains they are the Divisional rep for Physical Sciences, notes that at the last Divisional Board there was a concern about the replacement of the Assessment Boards, there is concern about this changes, the level of scrutiny and how it will impact students?

A. Nina responds that all the work is still being undertaken, it is just being done in a different way, we have removed some meetings where criteria or rules have been met, but we have added a second layer of scrutiny, ‘Deans Scrutiny’ will compared results from each year to the previous 2/3/4 years of grades. This gives us an extra bit of comfort and adds to the current quality assurance processes.

Q. Member asks what Nina’s remit is and that of QuEST.

A. We are the Quality Enhancement Support Team (QuEST), we work under the Vice Principle for Learning Teaching and Students. We ensure requirements of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) are met. We support the approval of new programmes, Annual Monitoring and Internal Led Reviews, collaborative arrangements, Academic Quality Committees and approve external examiner appointments.

Q. Member explains they are the Division Rep for Psychology and Social Work and has recently surveyed the Division to ask how people feel about returning to campus, notes there was quite a mixed response. Asks if there be any Transitions Workshops to help students settle in? If not, can we organise some. Member notes they’d be happy to be involved in setting something up.

A. Nina responds that this is a great idea and thanks member for checking in with students, notes many of us are feeling apprehensive about returning, including staff. The university is doing a lot of work to improve and enhance the campuses and spaces to make everyone feel supported and comfortable. Adds what’s important is that there’s a value to being on campus, what activities will you do on campus. Also thanks member for volunteering to help and requests member to email her to discuss the idea further.

Comment: Member notes with Nina that she is the first guest at Council this year who we feel actually cares about us and are concerned about how we are doing and wants to listen. Please take this information back to your colleagues. Adds that students should be able to express how they feel and this is the first time we feel listened to and further thanks Nina for her willingness to listen.

Nina thanks member for their kind words and congratulates them on their recent nominations and award at the Union Big Awards, thanks them for being so active especially with heath concerns recently.

Q. Chair asks in what ways students can input to the university systems and processes

A. Nina note sometimes engagement is a bit clunky or ad hoc, adds that over the last few years we have worked very closely with Sabbatical Officers and the Academic Quality Committee has been a very good place to raise issues, School Officers will be joining the Committee next year too. Explains that Johnathan Powles is also reviewing the membership of the Student Experience Committee to with a view to include Divisional Reps, it’s also a good forum for sharing what students are thinking and feeling about their university experience. Further notes the Curriculum Framework will help with feedforward and feedback, sessions are being held over the next few weeks for consultations on this new framework. We’re asking members to consider what we can do to make it easier, better, fairer, we would welcome your thoughts?

Member notes they are a member of the UWS Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee and does feel that group listen to what students are saying and they ask students for their support and input. However there is a lot of communication from the University which the language is inaccessible or leads to confusion about the rules or what’s expected. For example, when the 3 week extension was introduce, the Uni kept saying ‘up to’, this was very unhelpful as it led lecturers/programme leaders to believe they could decide how much of an extension was appropriate rather than the student saying what would work for them, the response from the Senior Management on this was shocking and they just didn’t seem to grasp the severity of the issue.

Nina response there are some things coming up which I would like to do in partnership with students, supporting students to come forward and put their hand up when things happen is really important. Projects include academic integrity and confident conversations to ensure difficult issues are being dealt with. Further note she would love to have a joint group with students about this and would like to discuss the role of lectures and exams and how they can developed

Member responds that they do agree that it is for the students to say when things aren’t happening but a lot of students don’t like to come forward and they would prefer if you went to them. Many students were struggling during exam time because we were in lockdown and the schools were closed. Member add they had emailed students and asked how they were coping at the time and they came back saying they were struggling but didn’t feel able to speak to the teaching staff about it.

Nina thanks member for their honest input and takes the point on board.

Q. VP Welfare and Wellbeing notes some of the language that Uni uses in communications to students can be ambiguous and difficult to understand. Maybe there is an opportunity for us here and student group to work on the quality of messaging. Sometimes we have been asked for feedback but even after it, things have gone out the same. This is a bit disheartening and it would be useful to know at what point students can give feedback which will be considered.

A. Nina agrees that communication is sometimes not very good and we are looking at a framework for communication and trying to make sure that our communication is clearer and easier to understand. Adds that communication was picked up as an area for improvement in the recent Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) and agrees that language is extremely important, it is an area that we must enhance.

Q. Chair asks if communication has improved since the ELIR.

A. Nina notes that it’s a work in progress, we had a follow up from ELIR in 2020 and communication is an institutional priority, we have set up working groups and gone back to basics to ensure we are getting those right.

Comment. Member notes the culture between the University and Union can sometimes be a barrier to good communications. When Senior Managers attend Council as guests we don’t always feel listened to and there can sometimes be very strong differences in what students are saying is happening in their classes and what the Senior Managers are saying they think happens. We need Senior Management Question Time to be more like this, or maybe Nina can come all the time, member notes how Nina has contributed to this meeting and has been more open and honest than any others this year. Adds that If we can create a culture of something like this, it will make it a lot easier to communicate and share ideas.

Nina thanks member for their comments and notes she is in a fortunate position to have been able to build strong relationships with colleagues from the Union including Sabbatical Officers. Notes Jonathan brings a new aura and is very keen to bring more student voice to the fore, we would like to bring clear opportunities for communication and partnership working.

Chair thanks Nina for coming to Council and being so open in answering our questions.

Nina thanks members for inviting her along and helping her to feel so welcome, wishes students the best of luck for their assessments.

1. **Review of previous minutes (Paper 1)**
2. **March Council Minutes**

Minutes were accepted as true and accurate record

1. **Board Report (Paper 2)**

VP Student Development speaks to the Paper on behalf of the Board, notes the President has provided information on what the Board has been working on, this includes a staffing restructure and recognition of the 10% cut in funding that we had. The Board has also been planning for next year.

There are no questions

1. **Sabbatical Officer Reports (Paper 3)**
	1. **President**

Chair notes the President has submitted apologies for this meeting as he is unwell. VP Welfare and Wellbeing notes with members there is a correction in the Presidents report, states that ‘puppies’ should be replaced with ‘dogs’, the Paws Against Stress events don’t involve puppies and the charity we work with would welcome this correction.

* 1. **Vice President Education – Not Yet Submitted**

VP Education takes report as read. Notes there are 2 things to highlight. First, we are holding a Research Symposium on 18 May and we’d like to invite anyone who is working on a research project to come along and talk about their project. Secondly, we have been receiving your concerns about hybrid learning, we will continue to advocate for flexibility, availability of support services online and we will pay attention to lecture halls and resource centres being used. We will invite students for a consultation regarding the University’s plans for hybrid learning and we’ll work to ensure the University use clear and accessible language.

* 1. **Vice President Student Development**

VP Student Development takes report as read, notes the focus has been on preparing Societies for next year and preparing the handover to the new VP.

* 1. **Vice President Welfare & Wellbeing**

VP Welfare and wellbeing takes report as read. Member asks if there is any possibility of in person graduations. VP Welfare and Wellbeing notes with members currently the University’s position is that they will offer virtual graduations in Summer and Winter, but we will continue to ask for in person graduation for winter as we have some suggestions how this could be done

1. **Second Court Representative Elections***The Second Court Representative is the student representative, elected by Student Council, to represent students to the University’s Board of Governors (also called the University Court).*

*In line with our constitution, the candidates for this election are all of the successful Sabbatical Officers candidates from the 2021 election cycle.*

*During the session of council each candidate will outline their preference for being elected and why they should be the second court rep. All Sabbatical Officers have to be candidates, but not all have to want to be elected – and the officers will outline that preference*

Chair outlines we have two spaces on UWS Court, one is automatically the President and the second Rep (known as the Second Court Rep) is elected by Council. Notes the 3 Vice Presidents are automatically nominated and we invite them to outline why they should (or shouldn’t) be elected

Claire Morris, VP Student Development Elect: requests members don’t vote for her but vote for Luke Humberstone, current and elect VP Welfare and Wellbeing. Notes there are family difficulties and would prefer the role go to VP Welfare and Wellbeing.

Kevin Miguim, VP Education Elect, notes the new Sabbatical Team had a conversation between them regarding this and he too would like to encourage members to vote for Luke Humberstone.

Luke Humberstone, Current and Elect VP Welfare and Wellbeing thanks the VP Elect’s for the vote of confidence. Notes he would do his best to consult with other sabbs and as many students as possible, will also do his best to keep everyone informed about Court decisions and discussions

Chair moves to vote

34 Votes For Luke Humberstone
1 Vote For Claire Morris

Luke Humberstone is duly elected as the Second Court Representative.

*32 Members remained, making the threshold for a policy to pass 17.*

1. **Policy debate (Paper 4)**
	1. **Progressive Action on Gender Based Violence by Sarah Anderson***This policy petitions sabbatical officers to take action on gender based violence.*

Proposer notes this policy came about as a result of attending NUS Conference and since then we have joined the ‘Not On My Campus’ movement in Scotland to raise awareness and combat Gender Based Violence. There is a great need for the policy especially bearing in mind how it affects students and how prevalent it is.

There are no other comments, Chair moves to vote

For: Unanimous, 26 votes

Policy passed

* 1. **Progressive action on Decolonisation of UWS, SAUWS and wider community by Sarah Anderson***This policy petitions sabbatical officers to take action on decolonisation.*

Proposer notes this is similar to the previous policy in that it’s important to raise awareness and take real action. NUS is already providing lots of resources on this issue. Member adds that words are not enough anymore and real action needs to be taken, Artworks and Statues of racists on our campuses is not being discussed and there is no reason for them being there.

There are no other comments, Chair moves to vote

For: 69% - 20 Votes For

Policy passed

* 1. **Genuine Hybrid Education by Sarah Anderson***This policy petitions the Students’ Union to demand that UWS sticks to promises given on hybrid education.*

The proposer notes this policy was submitted as a disables student, member was informed they’d need a Consultants letter if they aren’t able to attend campus next year or they should defer for the year, notes it’s had a negative impact on their mental health and feels the Uni should make more effort to ensure students are able to continue studies despite their disability.

VP Welfare and Wellbeing speaks against the policy noting the member has been put in a situation which shouldn’t have happened, this has been a mistake. The University is working hard to develop an effective hybrid learning model and should this policy pass, it could be difficult for the Union to carry forward the work we have already started.

The proposer appreciates this point and trusts the Sabbatical Officers to do what’s best for students.

For: 3% - 1 Vote

Policy rejected

* 1. **Motion to Condemn Conversion Therapy by Ellie Gomersall***This policy calls UWS to condemn the practice of conversion therapy, support campaigns to end conversion therapy, exclude those who support the practice, and ensure Advice workers are able to support survivors.*

Proposer notes this policy asks that support is provided by Advice Workers for any student who has experienced this and no organisation should be allowed on our campuses who support this type of psychological torture. Adds the issue is broader and wider than the Union and the University but it affects so many people and is so damaging. Proposer further notes the political actions taken by the Scottish and Westminster governments to condemn and make illegal this practice explaining that it’s not enough, adding it’s appalling that we need a policy to condemn this inhumane torture.

Member notes they agreed with the policy however is concerned about the language used as it may exclude some student members who are also political party members and are working to improve the stance of the political party.

David Devlin, Head of Union Support Services notes with members there is a great sentiment behind this policy however the Union is not able to provide the support to people who have been affected by the issue, we would signpost people to specialist support. Adds we also have the Safe Space Policy which will be enhanced and supported by this policy.

Members move to vote

For: 89% - 24 votes

Policy passed

* 1. **A Little Extra Support for New Students by Kirsty Randall***This policy proposes that UWS put together short videos to show students key skills for studying at UWS.*

Proposer notes they’ve observed that direct entry students in 2nd year as well as continuing students have had difficulties and issues with using some technologies to support their studies. The pandemic has caused a lot of issues and the IT difficulties have been a real barrier for students. Explains there are students who’ve gone through the year not able to access Cite and Write or Banner or even know how to make a call on Teams. We’re referred to video’s online but they are too long and not engaging, they aren’t made for our systems or how we work. Proposer suggest that there are short video clips with help on the university systems so that students’ studies are not adversely affected.

Member asks how this could be implemented, Proposer notes we could make the video’s student to student, or we could go into classes at the start of term and talk to students about it.

Many members agree with the policy, Chair moves to vote

For: Unanimous, 29 votes

Policy passed

* 1. **COP26: The World Will Be Watching Us by Ellie Gomersall**

Proposer notes the Climate Change Conference being held in Glasgow in November this year, the venue of the conference is 5 miles from our Paisley campus and is an excellent opportunity for the Union and the whole University to play an active role in challenging world leaders to create real and visible change. The policy asks for the Board and the Union to consider how the decisions they make impact on the environment, it also mandates the Union to support students to get actively involved with the conference.

There are no comments, Chair moves to vote

For: Unanimous- 26 Votes

Policy passed

1. **Future of Student Council – Open Discussion led by Sabina Lawrie, Student Representation and Policy Coordinator**

*Everything has been different this year, and this is an opportunity to have an open discussion on what you would like to see from your student council in the future. In particular we’d like to seek student rep opinions on
- Sabbatical Officer Accountability
- Policy Creation
- Senior Managers Question time
- Policy Discussion*

Sabina Lawrie, Student Representation and Policy Co-ordinator, thanks Chair for their role and contributions this year, adds it’s been a challenging year and you were the first one who did it online and with the highest attendance.

Adds we did Student Council differently this year, it’s important for us to be able to provide the scaffolding for these meetings so we need your opinion on the way we’ve run the meetings this year, what worked and what hasn’t worked and what do you want to do differently.

**Sabbatical Officer Accountability discussion**

Sabina Lawrie explains that the Sabbatical Officers report to you as Reps and Council members, you hold them to account for the manifesto pledges and what they do for students. They provide a report to each Council meeting and there has not been a lot of questions or suggestions when this happens. How do you feel about holding the Officers to account and do you think this is the place to do it or should we do it in a different way?

VP Welfare and Wellbeing notes he likes to speak about his work and what he has achieved but students may be a bit apprehensive to speak in front of everyone so what if anonymous questions could be sent before a meeting, would members engage that way.

Member notes as a new student to UWS they would like more clarity on who's who and what they do, who the guests are and their roles, this information may be available elsewhere but could be added onto agendas.

Sabina Lawrie notes that perhaps a bit more explanation is needed about the role of Council and Sabbatical Officers so that it’s easier to know who to address for what issue or project.

Member notes the format of the report is speaking about completed tasks and seems a little like ‘box ticking’. Perhaps drop-in sessions, video reports etc. are a good idea as well.

Member notes It’s been difficult to have the level of accountability this year., Zoom is a difficult space. There needs to be something mandated so that everyone finds a place that they find comfortable to ask questions

Sabina Lawrie asks members with any ideas of where and/or how to hold Sabbatical Officers accountability happens, to please put it in the chat or contact us later.

**Senior Manager’s Question Time discussion**

Sabina Lawrie asks if this session works, are we inviting the right people, are we asking the right questions and can we make it easier for you to ask questions?

Members comment it’s good to have Question Time and it worked best today because we had a guest who was positive. It has not been so good in previous meetings, Senior Managers should have more respect for Council and it’s members, the Principles behaviour was unacceptable.

Sabina Lawrie notes with members that we’ve had feedback from the University that sometimes the questions asked are not within the remit of the guests, do you think we have to prepare them in advance?

VP Welfare and Wellbeing notes that some guests do not want to commit to an answer on the difficult questions while others for example do not want to explain in detail the reasoning behind decisions.

Member suggests that the Teams Course Rep page could be a good place for supporting each other and deciding on questions

David Devlin thanks members for their contributions during the year and today, explains to members that they are beating themselves up for not doing enough, but this year we hit a lot of records and achieved a lot and this is thanks to you and your efforts. Adds we were all in a situation of a pandemic, some of you have been reps for the first time and we had the highest number of attendance and vote in our democratic processes.

David Devlin asks members what worked with Nina Anderson-Knox today that did not work with others?

Members comment that today we had a conversation with Nina, we didn’t get a lecture from her, and she heard us, she didn’t just listen, she actively listened and responded in a human compassionate manner, really valuing our contribution. If she didn’t know something she said, Nina has already responded to an email sent during this meeting. The Senior Managers need to remember we are students not professional, corporate graduates.

David Devlin adds that Nina has always been student facing and this has probably helped. She kept it real and honest which you liked.

**Policy creation changes discussion**

Sabina Lawrie explains we’ve been trying to improve the policy voting, registration and discussion at Council, how has this been over the year

Chair notes sometimes it felt that the policy discussion is a bit slow, it is not easy to introduce and amend policies and the discussion is a bit too formal

VP Welfare and Wellbeing would welcome the idea of Policy Cafes, NUS have a good policy reviewing system which could work.

Members also suggest combining similar policy areas and suggesting amendments would be good, maybe we could also discuss ideas rather than strict policy.

Sabina Lawrie adds we will support policy development a bit more next year and we’ll take these suggestions on board, asks members with any other ideas to get in touch.

Chair thanks all members for their contribution to this meeting and all others. Members thank Chair for his duties over the year and running the most successful and well attended Council meetings.

Chair brings the final meeting of Council to a close and welcomes members to stay for an informal chat.