**UWS Students’ Union**

**Societies Council Minutes**

**Wed 28th October 2020, 2pm-4pm**

**Chair:** Clare Hunter, VP Student Development (CH)

**Clerk:** Jamie McDowall, Student Opportunities Coordinator (JMcD)

**No. of student attendees:** 11

**No. of societies represented:** 13

* Chemical Engineering (JM, SM, CR)
* Games Development (EA)
* Christian Union (EA)
* Friends of the Bees (SR)
* Accessibility to Education (HE, EG, SA)
* African and Caribbean (RM)
* Women’s Group (EG)
* Greens (EG, DH)
* Dramatic Arts (EG)
* Physics (EG)
* SNP (SA, SR)
* Social Work (SA)
* Paramedic (RT)

Red text indicates action points to be followed up

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| **Agenda** | |
| 2.00-205 | Welcome |
| 2.05-2.15 | Introductions   * Register of societies present * Final opportunity for Societies Executive Committee nominations |
| 2.15 | Societies Executive Committee nominations close |
| 2.15-2.25 | Update from Clare Hunter, Vice President of Student Development |
| 2.25-2.45 | Discussing how society activities have been going this year so far   * What has worked well? * What difficulties have there been? * Sharing ideas for online events |
| 2.45-3.00 | Societies Executive Committee Elections   * Introduction from each nominee * Voting |
| 3.00-3.05 | Break |
| 3.05-3.35 | Open discussion   * Opportunity for societies to voice ideas, issues and feedback |
| 3.35-3.45 | Feedback on ongoing training plan for societies |
| 3.45-3.50 | Societies Executive Committee Election results |
| 3.50-4.00 | Final thoughts and questions |

**Welcome, Introductions and Register**

* All societies welcomed
* Form shared for submitting any final nominations for Soc Exec Committee

**Update from Clare Hunter, Vice President of Student Development**

* CH gave round up of what she has been working on
  + Promoting and developing academic societies
  + Supporting set up and development of liberation and representation groups

**Discussing how society activities have been going this year so far**

* SK: societies don’t receive notifications when new members join. It is also very hard to check to see new members and make sure they aren’t missed
* JMcD: MSL (website provider) have said notifications are not possible
* SA: emails from website don’t work either
* RT: no notifications of new members means you can’t differentiate them from existing members
* EG: not clear what you’re agreeing to when you join a society. What are societies allowed to store in terms of GDPR?
* JMcD will update Society Resources page on website with GDPR guidance
* SA asked for about liberation groups, gaining staff support for academic societies and using Discord for communication between societies
* CH: Jamie has made guide for academic staff which is being sent out
* CH: Discord doesn’t work for everyone, can present GDPR issues. Societies need to use what works for them. Could we create a roadmap of what each society uses for information? We know emails have limited effectiveness
* EA: society members don’t read emails
* CH: we will come back to comms. at a later date. We will see if there’s ways to help societies identify new member sign ups
* SA is happy to help people with using Discord
* JM: (returning to academic societies question) Chem Eng staff have been really helpful but there is no engagement from students, especially new students. There is no social atmosphere with online events. You can’t force people to speak during online meetings.
* CH: There is only so much we can do about this. Is it a matter of addressing wider issues? Eg. time commitment of potential members. Why would people want to get involved? We can’t force people to engage in online events
* RM: Zoom fatigue is a problem. Online events get exhausting
* EG: Dram Arts Soc have found it good to move away from online meetings and focus on specific online events instead of sitting and talking. They use polls to see what people want and when, then promote the specific events
* SA: online meetings can be scary but you can get used to it. Silly ice breaker games were helpful for making people feel comfortable during Students’ Union Freshers’ events
* JMcD highlighted that Chem Eng Soc have difficulty that all previous activity was social nights out and trips, which can’t be replicated online
* EG: This is the same for Dram Arts. We’ve had to be very creative and looked for other opportunities, then tried them to find out what works
* SA: online events have provided new opportunities. Can we have a suggestions list for things that have worked?
* RT: Paramedic Soc have used Instagram to find guest speakers, relevant to the soc and fun. People have been really interested in this. Friday night drinks are also popular!
* EG: Dram arts have also enjoyed online events with drinks
* HE: Online events can create barriers

**Societies Executive Committee Elections**

* Two nominations received for four positions available:
* Ellie Gomersall: a member of 5 soc committees, enjoy getting socs working together, was a freshers vol and helped organise sport and society nights last year
* Sarah Anderson: passionate about liberation, diversity and equality. Want to help develop this in the university
* Council approved election of both nominations onto Soc Exec Committee
* JMcD: Committee will be supported by Students’ Union Volunteering Team.
* We will continue to promote remaining positions, which can be elected at future Soc Councils

**Open discussion**

* EA: Asked for advice on how to get speakers to deliver talks/workshops for societies
* CH: we are happy to help with this. The best thing to do is to ask academic staff, who will know the best people to contact
* JMcD shared academic staff guide to show how we are encouraging staff to help societies. If staff don’t help we will encourage them to do so.
* JMcD: we will also be adding Funding Application Form to website so socs can access financial support from Union

**Feedback on ongoing training plan for societies**

* CH: We don’t want to overload people with training but have ideas for what can be delivered. Need opinions on this. What training? When? Length of sessions?
* HE: Mental Health First Aid
* SR: Hosting Zoom events
* EG: GDPR
* EG: wouldn’t want to sit through an hour session for any online training. Is it possible to have quick instruction videos?
* RM: or even quick power point presentations if they’re quicker for Union to produce
* RM: we are all exhausted of zoom meetings
* SA: a lot of training isn’t very accessible so videos/pp presentations would be a good alternative
* JMcD: we are already working on creating some videos but it has been difficult to get them finished because of lost time over summer
* CH: can’t make promises on when videos can be made but are working on them. Might need to ask for more feedback to make sure these are useful and accessible

**Final thoughts and questions**

* CH: we will use polls to decide times for next meetings
* EG: would prefer more regular one hour meetings instead of two hour meetings
* All agreed to change Societies Council meetings to more regular, one hour meetings for the rest of this academic year
* SA: Can we record meetings for people who couldn’t make meeting? Minutes are not always accessible
* JMcD: minutes will be available on website. The Soc Exec Committee will work to find best way to share information from meeting and actions which come from it
* HE: audible minutes might be helpful
* CH thanked everyone for coming. Societies will be contacted for next meeting date