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# **Union Council (Hustings)**

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| **Date:** | 20.02.25 |
| **Time:** | 5.00pm |
| **Location:** | S3.02 and Online |

## **Minutes**

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| 1.0 | 1.1 | **Present:** Lucy Ryan, Will Deeley, Natasha Neal, Wren Sell, Amy Pile, Tristan Tipping, Matthew Kitching, Jenaya-Nicole Hackshaw, Kelly Wiles, Imogen Sanders, Katie Smith, Alex Ditchburn, Samantha Bwire, Jazeel Shihaab, Adrianna Flores, Adriana Kawaszova, Sam Gupta, Lauren Milne, Noa-Marie Roberts, Erin Cook, Dee Whyte, Ellie Lee, Theo Richens, Ben Gibbons, Emily Perry, Shannon Vale, Con Macadam, Fabian Moore, Jayden Wheeler, James Wade, Vytautas Kravcenka, Emily Crawshaw, Keleigh Brady, John Heatley, Jean Marc Amagoua, Joseph Burrell, Thomas Broadbent, Aaron Trinder, Grace Tomlin, Dan Charlton, Daisy Davies, Eve Matthews, Charlie Gee, Hana Tauseeque, Harriet Kozlowski, Izzy Eastham, Nicole Efamini, Abigail Hix, Nash Goragodo, Timothy Muradzikwa, Henry Obiefuna, Michael Wilcox, Hugo Chapon, Lily Reuter, Matilda Fiorini, Patricia Etuvnam Adafienu, Indie Moscrop, Hannah Chatterton, Joshua Nunn, Lilly Wood, Lewis McEreaney Edward Prempeh, William Johnson, Holly Spittles, Isham Constance, James Goodacre, Sam Fernandez, Lottie Lyons, Anish Khuttan, Sarah Squirell, Souda Chowdhury, Donna-Marie Langston, Sachin Davis, Sarah Jackson, Alyssa Davison, Jasmine Young, Stephanie Rodriguez, Duarte Basto De Lima, Aliyah Rashid, Alana De Capua, Matthew Osborne, Tricia Glassborrow, Jess Leach, Huneeda Raza, Kuziwa Mpsiaunga, Sadie Stratford, Harry Knowles, Malavika Sreekumar, Kyra Dawe, Wesley Cooney, Jack Vince, Emily Smyth, Nadia Foquim, Jo, Gurman Singh, Ritamary Benny, Luke Cole, Marcia Jalo, Sophie Lloyd-Rossi, Grace Paisley, Gary Ogilvie, Tejal Palmer, Eugenia Paintsil |  |
|  | 1.2 | **In attendance:** Sarah Nawaz |  |
|  | 1.3 | **Apologies for Absence (Union Officers only):** |  |
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| 2.0 |  | **Welcome and Key Dates** | **LR** |
|  |  | * Attendees welcomed and the agenda for the meeting was outlined * Key dates coming up: * Voting week 3rd March to noon on Friday 7th. * Varsity 9th and 13th March |  |
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| 3.0 |  | **Candidate Presentation and Questions: President** |  |
|  |  | * Candidates: Harry Tomlinson (HT), Hugo Chapon (HC), Jean Marc Amagoua (JMA), Shannan Vale (SV) * Each candidate introduced themselves and the course they are studying |  |
|  | 3.1 | *As President, you will be part of the team making significant decisions that affect the Students’ Union What skills do you have to be able to handle this level of decision-making?*   * HT: working in my current role, I have learnt a lot about collaboration especially with the other officers. It’s about hearing everyone’s opinion, liaising with the appropriate people and speaking to other departments within the union, as well as with students. The main skill is communication with one another and having a good moral compass. * JMA: I have been a part of a committee as well as president of men’s rugby. In those roles there is a lot of decision making and leadership. I have also been a part of the leadership academy which has helped build skills. There main thing is to be there for students. * HC: I am an international student from Spain. It is important to defend the needs of students. I can be blunt but will think of solutions for problems as well as listen to a person and get what the real issue is. I am good at listening and getting all the information. * SV: As vice presidents for the dance society, I learnt a lot about leadership. I am not afraid to say no if it will be a benefit. I have held lecturers accountable when I was studying. I was the only female in the cadets so had to work to make sure my voice was heard. Also am honest and will say when I don’t know something. |  |
|  | 3.2 | *Engaging Uxbridge and Aylesbury students with Union activities continues to be an area for improvement What would you do to tackle this?*   * SV: I would have appointed committee members at those campuses making it more accessible for students to engage. Would also try and facilitate more visits to these campuses. * JMA: use social media by creating a page for each campus with events that are happening there. Would also have more events so students feel included and provide transport to them. Also improve resources such as books * HT: it has always been a struggle to engage these students but would have more activities on campus using the current facilities and resources. Have union staff go over more to engage and inform students of all the things available at the union * HC: both campuses could benefit from each other. I would encourage them to have more events and will go there to meet with the students. It is important to make sure we connect with them |  |
|  | 3.3 | *The President works closely with the Union Events team. How would you work together to organise and promote a variety of appealing student events?*   * JMA: I would like to organise a cultural day with students wearing clothes, bringing food and telling stories so people can understand their culture. Also have talk sessions for those who struggle with their mental health. It is important to work closely with the events team and would also ask the other campuses what they would like from the events team. * HT: I have previously worked in the bar and saw the types of engagement had with students and the most popular events. The niche events tend to be well attended. Would liaise with the events team to see what their ideas are and ask other union departments what events they want to see * HC: events can be a door to promote wellbeing to students. I would provide better free meals as well has having new events. Students form next year will be paying more for their course but currently the university only has 4 mental health advisors, so will be lobbying for more. * SV: have experience of running events. The team currently do a lot in the union but would like to see more friendly timed events which are available online and without cost. We can be creative and ask around for ideas, can work collaboratively to make things happen |  |
|  | 3.4 | Submitted Questions:  *In one sentence, what is the most pressing area that needs to be addressed?*   * HC: mental health wellbeing. Students struggle to get an initial diagnosis which can stop them reaching their potential, need more professionals * HT: student safety on all campuses. Need to look at the current measures such as access to buildings, upgrading CCTV and helpers during big events. * JMA: from my manifesto, mental health and student safety is a priority especially in Wycombe. Would look at improving CCTV and having more talk sessions not just with professional but between students * SV: Not clear cut, as what is a priority for her won’t be for others. There is a lack of understanding/awareness on what is currently on offer to tackle issues students may have. Would also look to ensure resources are of standard.   *With the change in university leadership, how will you ensure students remain at the front?*   * HT: the new vice chancellor wants to change the way funding is used. He will make sure that that funding goes into classroom resources and updating equipment * SV: there is a disconnect between the vice chancellor and students, so I would act as channel between the two and ensure student views are heard by him. * JMA: the student voice needs to be heard more. For years student have had ideas and expectations that have been heard but with no action. I would be the bridge in between and hold him accountable * HC: I would get the vice chancellor to attend nights out, training, get him to live and understand the student experience. I would communicate the reals needs of the student and make sure he feels them. |  |
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| 4.0 |  | **Candidate Presentation and Questions: Vice President Achievement and Belonging** |  |
|  |  | * Candidates: Abi Hix (AH), Joseph Burrell (JB), Madhav Jayalal (MJ), Shannan Vale (SV) * MJ unable to attend and gave a statement: * ‘Hi everyone, apologies I can’t be there today as I’ve had to fly home urgently. As an international student who’s called this university ‘Home’ for three years, I know firsthand how vital it is to feel like you belong. I’ve stood with you as a student and leader, and if elected, I’ll use these experiences to fight for your student life   As VPAB, I will: launch student-led cultural events, host monthly forums where your concerns are heard and acted on, organise employers who sponsor international talent and value diverse perspectives.  I’m running because I’ve walked these halls as an international student and through leadership roles, listened to your struggles. Now I want to turn those insights into action – let’s build a university where everyone belongs.’   * Each candidate introduced themselves and the course they are studying |  |
|  | 4.1 | *VPAB oversees the Union’s equality, diversity, and inclusion work How would you ensure the diverse student population at BNU is represented?*   * SV: first step is realising I will not represent everyone and everything. I want to be that person to hear from those minority communities so they can be heard. I would hold regular meetings. By hearing experiences this can lead to actions. I would take accountability for those not in the room but should be able to experience BNU. * JB: It is really important to represent all backgrounds, religions and ethnicities. I would do this by putting on different events and inviting all students. I am always willing to learn about different cultures and celebrate them with others. * AH: Past officers have looked to boost events in the SU and I would want to continue this by making them bigger and more accessible. I would also have hybrid events so commuting students etc could get involved. |  |
|  | 4.2 | *Non-September intake students often feel they are not offered the same co-curricular opportunities How would you encourage them to engage and feel part of the SU?*   * AH: refresher’s in my first year was a nice way of connecting and reconnecting. It is important to push the same activities that are put on for the September freshers. A big deal is not made for the other intakes so need to give them the same importance. * SV: important to acknowledge that everyone is anxious about approaching societies etc to join. One suggestion is having a Jan intake rep to act as a liaison * JB: Student who joined in September have created a bond so other intakes can feel its daunting coming in and joining. Important to encourage them to take part. Should also make the refresher’s fair as big as the September one |  |
|  | 4.3 | *What are your plans to promote and improve the union’s activities that aren’t clubs or societies? E.g. sustainability, volunteering, or professional skill*   * JB: would be good to push volunteering and green initiatives. I would speak to students and see what grabs their interest and try and tailor volunteering around this. Would also see if its possible to set up opportunities that is relevant to their course * AH: Hybrid events is a good way of steeping away from clubs and societies. I would work with the training and development team and introduce networking nights. Would also work with clubs and societies to show them the importance of what they are doing and giving them the motivation to be more sustainable. * SV: Wales is good at recycling and being sustainable, and there are steps the university can do to be more sustainable. This includes having more options for commuting students. Volunteering is something that is important to me and I would always push for others to do it. For professional skills, I have been through the graduate journey so know what is useful. This needs to start earlier not just in the third year and should be in daily conversations. |  |
|  | 3.4 | Submitted Questions:  *What would you implement to support neurodiverse individuals in events, clubs/societies and improve accessibility?*   * SV: neurodiversity is important to me having recently been diagnosed. I would advocate for those that don’t feel comfortable to speak up and hols clubs and societies accountable so they are looking after their vulnerable members. This can be tackled in many ways and embolden people to be confident and feel they can achieve something . My manifesto point includes having quiet spaces at events so people don’t feel they have to go home or miss out. The more we talk, the more we learn * AH: one of my manifesto points is to introduce a peer support system. People need to have the chance to speak and be honest without being judged. It can be hard for some to talk to people so having safe spaces with like minded people would help provide support. Would also push for more funding to make spaces accessible for neurodiverse individuals * JB: similar to what the others have said, it is important to recognise those who are neurodiverse and have safe spaces where they can have quiet time. Clubs and societies need to have more training to recognise when people are uncomfortable or struggling.   *How would you display this information in a way that the union doesn’t do already (around safe spaces etc)?*   * AH: by having people trained in neurodiversity in the office so they are aware of the challenges and make it know to students who the trained staff are. It is important not to make those students who are already struggling to feel segregated * SV: by keeping an eye on those students who don’t have support. What the university does is already good but there is always room for improvement. Could get reps from those groups to speak to others. * JB: have social media posts of what’s in place so people are aware. Important not to push too much as that can put off people reaching out. Would also have staff trained in neurodivergence.   *With the growing population of international students, how would you improve their sense of belonging on campus?*   * JB: by hosting socials that are open to everyone. Get the word out that the union is for everyone and make them feel as welcome as possible * AH: it is important to recognise those students who are not heard or don’t speak up. I would make sure they feel represented by having student community hubs and a 24hr honesty box for feedback and opinions. All feedback is helpful and helps create a better and accepting union * SV: I would make sure that Uxbridge and Aylesbury feel a part of the university. Would do this by having committee members for clubs and societies on each campus to represent and liaise about events to ensure the experience is reflected across all campuses. For international student, I would ask them what they want from their university experience |  |
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| 5.0 |  | **Candidate Presentation and Questions: Vice President for Education and Welfare - High Wycombe** |  |
|  |  | * Candidates: Bethany Jackson (BJ), Con Macadam (CM), Dan Charlton (DC), Erin Cook (EC), John Heatley (JH), Lilly Reuter (LR) * Each candidate introduced themselves and the course they are studying |  |
|  | 5.1 | *What do you think is the main educational challenge facing students at High Wycombe and how would you tackle this?*   * LR: The worry of do I have enough money to study my course, creative courses have a lot of additional costs. Also if a student is in the right mental frame of mind, for example if a class is cancelled it can make them feel they are now behind in their studies * JH: if a student is struggling with their welfare this can affect their education for example their attendance falls. Need to make sure that the support is there. Additional course costs should also be kept in check * CM: if a student takes time off from university for health, after a certain amount of days they get emails from the university. This can make then not want to attend and more support is needed in getting the student back at university. There is a lot of accessibility issues, the red shed doors are not accessible for wheelchair users and the lifts break a lot. This can make it harder to attend classes and needs to be looked into. * DC: Sometimes modules are not relevant to the course and if you give feedback it falls on deaf ears so I want to make sure that it is heard and open a course queries portal for feedback. Also some students feel isolated from other course, have irregular lecture times which means missing out on opportunities. I want the university to give the same experience to all. * EC: this is where everything happens, where the union is and events are. It is hard for some students to come into university and balance it with the social side. These students want to go to events to feel a part of it but could be working. University is a very different experience from college/sixth form and this can effect mental health and education. I would help this by putting on lessons around things like time keeping * BJ: if a student misses any part of university they can feel like they are swimming down and can’t get back up. Need make sure they can find the support and is it consistent across all university campuses |  |
|  | 5.2 | *In this role, you will sit on multiple University committees as the student representative How will you ensure the student voice is heard by senior members of staff?*   * CM: one of the main issues in getting voices heard is getting student feedback. It is difficult collecting feedback so might be good to have someone go into lectures and asking what the issues are rather than relying on Rep feedback. Could also have anonymous boxes around the university to submit feedback * EC: I would say it directly and follow up by finding out how the university would help students. Collecting student feedback can be difficult but need to find a way to get it and the university needs the feedback as proof that things are happening * LR: need to be approachable, not aggressive when people are speaking to you. By always being a listening ear and making sure people write down what the issue is and what they want changed so I can be prepared in meetings * DC: sometimes students don’t feel they have a voice especially if it’s an issue that only affects them. Have honest open sessions with course leaders and have anonymous feedback boxes * JH: initially gather the feedback from students. Have anonymous feedback system for broader issues. The Rep system works well for course specific feedback but also have a council for educational issues to discuss anonymous feedback and what they want done. * BJ: need to show students that they can give feedback throughout the year. Need to raise awareness that there is a system for students to raise issues. The university like hearing straight from students so would try and get students in the same room so they can hear from them first hand |  |
|  | 5.3 | *Students may seek your support with difficult and sensitive issues What skills do you have that would enable you to respond to these discreetly and compassionately?*   * DC: have dealt with sensitive issues personally so would use own experience to help. Make sue it is all about them and signpost to the relevant resources. I would try and keep it as anonymous as possible. * EC: not been in every situation but for the ones I have experienced I know how I wanted things to go. Have received help from the current officers and I would use the same approach, listening to them as much as I can and make them feel safe and heard. * LR: As the oldest siblings, I have learnt many things. Let who wants to speak to you lead the session so they don’t feel rushed and are able to express themselves. I have worked in various jobs so can bring that experience. Keep things discreet and refer to other services if needed * CM: previously been a safeguarding lead. Need to know what the person is expecting by coming to you, sometimes they just want to talk, may want a referral; need to know what they want out of it so you will be more likely to help them * JH: empathy, putting yourself in their shoes and asking how they want to move forward by sitting down having a conversation and planning the steps. Currently the welfare liaison for rugby and deal with various issues. It is important to be discreet. Recently completed a mental health in sport course. * BJ: have done various courses to deal with sensitive issues. Important to know what the student want to happen. Not possible to fix all issues but can direct them to the relevant help. |  |
|  | 5.4 | Submitted Questions:  *In one sentence, as you will be based at different campuses, how will you successfully work with the other VPEW?*   * JH: communication is key. The campuses have similar issues and both roles will be doing the same job. Would have regular meetings and have an overall approach to the job * BJ: by speaking to each other everyday, teams calls, keeping each other up to date with plans, presenting a cohesive and united front. * EC: communication is key, it is the same role but in different locations. By helping each other out and keeping up to date on the different events on campus * LR: by communicating consistently, making sure attention is brought to the things needed * CM: there will be a few issues that will overlap, so if there is an issue in HW there will be the same issue at UXB/AYLS. They are also there to help you if your not sure what to do and will have different ideas * DC: talking to each other, transferring campaigns between campuses. Also discuss and visit the other campuses   *If you could implement one thing from your manifesto, what would it be?*   * BJ: Quiet spaces, which is what I am still working on. Also making sure what is being said is coming across * DC: Safe drinking campaign, trying to promote students not to use it as a coping method * LR: the SSHH bus for staff and students for all events. Some events go on until 3am and staff leave even later so have to book Ubers to get home safely * CM: reintegration back into lectures if a student has been off and providing support to get them back into university * EC: student safety, make students feel safe while having the best university experience * JH: making sure halls of residence are a better standard when students move in |  |
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| 6.0 |  | **Candidate Presentation and Questions: Vice President for Education and Welfare – Uxbridge and Aylesbury** |  |
|  |  | * Candidates: Adrianna Flores (AF), Bethany Jackson (BJ), Erin Cook (EC) * Each candidate introduced themselves and the course they are studying |  |
|  | 6.1 | *What do you think is the main educational challenge facing students at Uxbridge and Aylesbury and how would you tackle this?*   * BJ: there are many challenges. Nursing students face issues with tutors, placements and not receiving the right support. Need to speak to students and see where the gaps are and make sure information is accessible for students so they can always find it. Many educational challenges but there are ways forward * EC: library and resources. The campuses are smaller so have less resources, with students having to order books. To tackle this would order more resources. These campuses are important and students should experience the same education as HW * AF: there are different challenges. Aylesbury has alack of resources and does not look approachable. Uxbridge is also not filled with books. Not everyone at these campuses are young so are unable to use computers and access books online. Also HW is open 24 hours with lots of events while Uxbridge students are isolated |  |
|  | 6.2 | *Students across Uxbridge and Aylesbury spend a large portion of their degree working on placements in their chosen field How would you support students’ welfare remotely whilst on these placements?*   * AF: by making sure staff are approachable and available. Students are waiting weeks before hearing from staff so would shorten this time and make sure support is available. Also liaise with the placement team and making sure students are doing the placements they prefer and need. Many student nurses have additional responsibilities so need support, would make placements aware of this if they are unable to attend due to commitments * BJ: so much signposting can be done but need to make sure physical systems are in place. Work with placement providers and connecting them with students so they know who to approach and there is someone face to face * EC: as part of my manifesto, would have drop in sessions to support students. A lot of staff have mental health training so could run these sessions. These sessions would be online but could be in person as well. This would help student welfare has they know there are sessions each week to attend. |  |
|  | 6.3 | *The cost-of-living crisis continues to be a challenge faced by many students over the past few years How would you continue to tackle the cost of living for all students at BNU?*   * EC: would continue what is already being done, monthly Monday meals, free meals and breakfast. Would like UXB and AYLS to have the same as HW like help yourshelf. Would also speak to students to see what help they need as each experience is different. Most are supporting families and well as studying so need to find out what support they need. * AF: tackling this will always be a challenge and does not include the cost of travelling to placement especially for international students who can’t get help with costs. Would lobby the higher powers to have financial help during tougher times and placements. Would also like to see help with the price of books as nurses spend a lot on books, they won’t use after studying. Would like to know what Aylesbury student would like to help them with the cost of living * BJ: the union already does a lot of work on this has initiatives in place like help yourshelf. There is the bookshelf at Aylesbury to borrow books as well as DVDs. Would extend the free meals to other campuses to match what is on offer at Wycombe. Would work with placement providers so students are provided for while on placement. Also look into solutions for travelling. |  |
|  | 6.4 | Submitted Questions:  *How would you plan to work with the university support services to support students?*   * BJ: the union currently works with the university support services, it is important to work together so we don’t contradict each other and that students are getting different information from different areas. Combining efforts makes sure its effective and not just ticking a box * EC: the university services are good but they are not about as much as they should be. Need to make sure everyone knows what each service does and how it can help. Some union staff are mental health trained but students are unaware so would promote this. The posters in Uxbridge are not up to date so would update these. There are great services but student don’t know about them. * AF: make sure they are visible and students know from word of mouth about the options available. Some older students are not online so may not know about the services, so would make it visible on campus. Need to make sure everything is not online   *A student wants to plan an evening event at Uxbridge after the campus link finishes. How would you help the student to provide transport?*   * AF: could use the SU buses or look into the cost of taxis to take them there and back. Students could also be reimbursed for their travel costs. * EC: run the minibuses, there are staff and students who can drive them so can make sure these are running * BJ: this was discussed recently. Need to make sure the union are involved in the planning so can ensure there are minibus drivers available. Could also look into using taxis if a driver is unavailable   *In one sentence. why should students vote for you?*   * EC: I would think about you, how its your experience and you’re the source to how to make it better * BJ: change comes from you, the people who are the experts on the university experience is you, its all about you * AF: I am a nurse, I’ve been there done that so if you vote for me, we can tackle them. |  |
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| 8.0 |  | **Date and time of subsequent meetings:** |  |
|  |  | Thursday 10th April 2025 at 5.00pm, Room S3.01 and Online |  |