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# **Union Council (Hustings)**

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| **Date:** | 29.02.24 |
| **Time:** | 5.00pm |
| **Location:** | S3.01 and Online |

## **Minutes**

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| 1.0 | 1.1 | **Present:** Lucy Ryan, Natasha Neal, Will Deeley, Amy Pile, Sruthi Subhash, Brandon Tester, Matthew Kitching, Ian Tuazon, Sarah Jackson, Jess Bradbury, Catherine Lymer, Tristan Tipping, Lesley Favager, Kelly Willes, Alex Ditchburn,  Kristen Clarke, Emily Perry, Patrick Fillingham, Gloria Penu, Jasmine Young, Trinity Baker, Rishi Bhatt, Bethany Hirst, Sophie Lloyd-Rossi, Abi Hix, Olivia Stocco, Rafael Pantaleon, Reece Newey, Liv Ross, Dipak Kandel, Ashleigh Jones, Sam Shepherd, Emily Crawshaw, Laurelle Henry,  Anna Poulsen, Charlotte Leighton-Woods, Nicole Efemini, Tyrese Senior  Poppy Ramsey, Will Johnson, Harriet Kozlowski, Matt Mcdermott, Grace Paisley, Camille Da Fonseca Teixeira, Lauren Milne, Oliwia Milkiewicz,  Nikola Milkiewicz, Francesca Rogers, Susie Green, Emily Pennell, Madhav Jayalal, Om Dhadwal, Abid Habib, Ines Silva, Harry Tomlinson, Esther Stephenson, Keisha Russ, Stacey Baxter, Ishia Jack, Lucy Holmes, Emily Smyth, Jorja Fulford, Keleigh Brady, Marissa Leyden, Finn Beaumont,  Scout Boulting, Bethany Jackson, Eleanor Lee, Euan McGiness, Renee Reynolds, Peter Ashiagbor, John Heatley, Vytautas Kravcenka, Tricia Glassborrow, Ali Alghazwari, Adel Abd Eldaim, Omer Mustafa, Mishara Senanayakage, Dee Whyte, Daniel Charlton, Ellie Lynn, Wren Sell, Luca Annibale, Caitlin Day, Erin Cook |  |
|  | 1.2 | **In attendance:** Sarah Nawaz |  |
|  | 1.3 | **Apologies for Absence (Union Officers only):** |  |
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| 2.0 |  | **Welcome** | **LR** |
|  |  | * Attendees were welcomed and an overview of how the meeting will run was given. * Attendees were reminded they would have the opportunity to ask the candidates questions. |  |
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| 3.0 |  | **Candidate Presentation and Questions: Vice President Achievement and Belonging** |  |
|  |  | * Candidates are: Ana Silva Timoteo (AST), Erin Cook (EC), Marissa Leyden (ML), Renee Reynolds (RR), Rishi Bhatt (RB) and Wren Sell (WS) * AST and RB were unable to attend the meeting and statements were read out on their behalf stating why they were running for the role. * The other candidates then introduced themselves and the course they are studying before answering questions set to them: |  |
|  |  | What do you feel is missing in terms of career support at BNU and how would you create a change for this?   * RR: at careers fairs that have been held at the university, I have not seen all courses catered for like animation which I am studying. It would be good to get more industries involved * EC: There is not much information on how to move forward with your career so it would be good to get people in who could help you progress. * WS: students need help finding work and placements, they contact employers but don’t receive a response. Students are here to learn but need the university to also help with careers. * ML: the Students’ Union have been helpful when trying to get a job. Current careers fairs are not inclusive as they do not cater for all courses so it would be good to get more people involved and for students to network.   How would you integrate recreational and developmental opportunities activities for non-September intake students?   * ML: by increasing events to happen during summer, volunteers are always around even during summer * WS: the refreshers fair helped especially with building societies and clubs but still need to push it more for next year. For the summer intake a similar event would be good * RR: agrees with the previous answers * EC: agrees with the others also might be useful to create events in January and April time to increase opportunities to attend.   Sabbatical Officers have to navigate through many different situations each day. What skills do you have that will help you to react to the array of tasks you will need to work through?   * WS: as a film student, I have to deal with many different situations and complications. I am able to problem solve and allocate tasks within a team. I am able to edit videos so will be able to promote events via social media. I am also chair of gaming and part of my role is to ensure registers are filled in, sessions and rooms are booked. I have heard some societies feel they weren’t given the same attention so I would ensure everyone is given an equal opportunity. * EC: Every day is different, and you have to learn to organise everything you do, which will help with different situations. I am a student rep for my course so had to deal with different issues and have also had student reps from other years approach me for help. * RR: I have had to organise many events and deal with different issues. This year I took on the role of coach. I love working with others and in a team; and am passionate about helping those who have gone through similar issues. * ML: being a sport therapy student means dealing with clients and working with other schools in the university. I have also attended skills sessions run by the Student’s Union. Through my various roles I have worked with numerous people, and I enjoy supporting others.   How would you work with the Students’ Union team to increase the feelings of student belonging at BNU?   * EC: I was very nervous when starting at BNU, the Student’s Union helped with this, and I would like to help increase that feeling for all students who come to BNU. I would work with the university mental health team to increase awareness to students and to make sure students know how to contact them. If a student receives help, they will feel they belong. * WS: clubs and societies can help as students have something in common. But need to make them more accessible to students from Uxbridge and Aylesbury who may feel they cannot take part due to not being able to travel to Wycombe. Having sessions on those campuses would help. Also need to reach out to the student body who don’t take part in clubs and societies to find out why and if they need help to access them. * ML: work with the Student’s Union team by putting on events during the summer so all students feel included, making sure students know that clubs and societies can be joined all year round, increase Sabb officer presence across all campuses to get to know students. * RR: having stronger communication across campuses. Promoting the mental health and disability services and having events earlier in the day so students from Uxbridge and Aylesbury can attend.   What ideas do you have to promote volunteering and sustainability?   * RR: through social media, but not everyone checks so promote through course chat to reach more students. Also visit halls and accommodation to promote. * WS: in clubs and societies it is difficult to get students to volunteer, they don’t want to get dirty. Would like to put forward other options for volunteering those students are interested in and organise during sessions so it is more social. * EC: by taking part, if students see I am doing it they will be more likely to do it. Push for volunteering opportunities within courses and societies so that are more relevant for the student; also, would like to do more sustainable things around the university. * ML: Involve all students. Some students don’t use social media so need to push to the wider student body. Maybe offer incentives within societies, getting students to repost social media posts to friends.   What do you think is the biggest challenge you will face if elected?   * ML: knowing when to stop, I get involved with so much already and the Students’ Union have given so much to me so I want to give back. * WS: being on camera. I am used to being behind the camera and behind the scenes so not used to being the face of something. * RR: challenge with being in a front facing role * EC: wanting to hear from all students, if I didn’t it would feel that I am not fulfilling role. |  |
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| 4.0 |  | **Candidate Presentation and Questions: Vice President/s for Education and Welfare (High Wycombe and Uxbridge)** |  |
|  |  | * Candidates for High Wycombe are: Anna Treble (AT), Bethany Jackson (BJ), Dhanya G Mohan (DM), Ellie Lynn (EL), Harry Tomlinson (HT), Lauren Feagan (LF), Nikola Milkiewicz (NM), Rishabh Jindal (RJ). * Candidates for Uxbridge and Aylesbury are: Bethany Jackson (BJ). * AT, DM, LF and RJ were unable to attend, and statements were read out on their behalf stating why they were running for the role. * The other candidates then introduced themselves and the course they are studying before answering questions set to them: |  |
|  |  | In your opinion, what is the main educational issues affecting students at your campus(es) and how would you tackle this?   * HT: There is a lack of proactive learning. There should be more opportunities to go on trips or for career professionals to come and speak. More 1 to 1 is needed between tutors and students. Feedback students receive isn’t always specific or helpful, need tutors to engage more with the feedback. * BJ: Students need help in finding placements and provided with more networking sessions. If students were signposted to events like Strive, they can get more information and support in finding placements * NM: More flexible and inclusive learning options are needed. Students with disabilities struggle with teaching so having recorded sessions available online would help. More quiet time in the classroom to study would also be helpful. * EL: Supporting the individual needs of a student is not done for example some students find it difficult to talk to others so cannot work in groups. There are issues on artistic courses in that it is not always clear when artistic choice is being used which effects feedback.   Students will seek your support, sometimes with difficult and sensitive issues. How would you confidently respond to these types of reports in a discreet and compassionate way?   * BJ: there are so many ways to approach, depending on the situation may need to signpost as may not be able to deal with myself, I would listen to a student and help if I can. Students come to you as someone they trust, need to make sure what the student does is their choice. * HT: would like to set up anonymous boxes where students can input their worries and stresses, large amount of student don’t have the confidence to speak about their issues and writing down issues can help. Having a box means these issues can be addressed internally or at union council, * EL: firstly, praise for them sharing their issues. It is important to push that they can share their issues. If I cannot help, would send them to the relevant services. * NM: thanks to her course she will be prepared for some of the issues and how to deal with students should they approach her. She has done a mental health first aid course and would find the most appropriate way to support them depending on how confident they are.   How would you work with the other VPEW to ensure student representation is accessible at all campuses?   * NM: talk to them, communication is key. Hold regular meetings about what is happening at other campuses and across BNU * HT: agree with communication being key, also share ideas to enforce a positive mindset and promote a positive attitude towards students and staff * EL: both sit down and work out what want to do with the role and what will cross over for example lots of the nursing students live in Wycombe but study in Aylesbury so issues like staying safe at night in Wycombe would be relevant to them. * BJ: communicating with each other and the other sabb officers. There is nothing stopping us going to each other’s campuses to speak to students. Would also put in student voice boxes.   The Union is committed to supporting student mental health. What ideas do you have to support student wellbeing?   * EL: Destigmatising mental health is important to her, support students to talk about it. Have access to a quiet room – has received feedback of students feeling overstimulated. Push awareness of the counselling team and work with exec officers for the issues their students would face. Highlight how to stay safe at night to new students, important that academic side are listening to students and working around these issues. * HT: everyone needs to accept that mental health is an issue at university. I want to normalise the conversation about mental health so that students can speak freely. I would create weekly sessions where students can come in and talk about their issues and for those that don’t feel comfortable talking, having anonymous boxes. Would also promote the advice centre more. * NM: the university has good services but they are not promoted enough by the teachers, so would be good for them to promote them. Students spend most of their time in lectures so are unaware of what is available. In the role, would work closely with teachers and push for more positive feedback to be given to students so their efforts are recognised. Also run an initiative to destigmatise disabilities and mental health issues * BJ: would do the same as the others, normalise mental health and address it by being direct. Would be that person students can approach. Would make sure mental health is not seen as a taboo and it is a strength to ask for help. Would promote the services offered by the university and any services available to those not on campus.   Within this role you will attend a lot of meetings, how will you manage your time so you can still connect and meet with students?   * HT: I like to think I am social, so am proactive in connecting with others, I like to know how others are doing so that aspect of the role I will be able to integrate in my time. * NM: organisation will be key. If I am limited on time I won’t book too much. I would use time before a meeting speak to students, these small conversations matter but I feel there will always be time to talk. * BJ: I take part in a lot of activities currently so manage my time well. I use a colour coded diary and would have a whiteboard outside the office with my availability, so students know when to come find her * EL: I would put my availability on social media and make sure I am always communicating with students as to what’s going on. Will try to leave time in my diary to speak to others.   How would you hold the university accountable for poor academic decisions?   * BJ: best way would be by having discussions and getting to the root of why the decision was made. Also put forward any alternatives that would work. * HT: If it’s a true failure on the university’s part, they would need to take responsibility. Would also push for the university to work with students and not bury the issue * NM: communication and working together to find a solution. If something is not working, try and come up with alternatives. Would try and be open about the issues students have raised and get as much detail. * EL: I would talk to both students and staff. Would get as much feedback from students to show there are issues. It is important to push the student voice and not back down.   What more can be done to include Uxbridge and Aylesbury campuses?   * NM: Student support is mostly at Wycombe campus so teachers should be more aware and implement more support at the other campuses. Would also push for support services to be made available outside of working hours. Online appointments are offered so there are options available. * HT: It is important to not separate mental health support and teaching; and to integrate them. Promote emotional positivity online through social media * BJ: Highlighting online services available outside of the university. Creating wellbeing packs that are available across all campuses * EL: Pushing virtual support as not all students know it is available and push for teachers to promote this. Put posters around campuses and have a member of the advice team go to Uxbridge campus once a week. |  |
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| 6.0 |  | **Candidate Presentation and Questions: President** |  |
|  |  | * Candidates are: Amy Pile (AP), Ines Silva (IS), Euan McGiness (EG), Mikhail George (MG), Rishabh Jindal (RB) * RB was not in attendance and a statement was read out on his behalf stating why he was running for the role. * The other candidates then introduced themselves and the course they are studying before answering questions set to them: |  |
|  |  | Some of our most successful activities and events stem from positive relationships with university colleagues. How would you look to maintain these relationships and use your skills to open new opportunities?   * MG: as a law student I am used to working with others. I spent 8 years as union rep in my job which involved dealing with different staff members and acting as a mediator. I have compassion and understanding which I can bring to the role. * AP: I would involve them in the activities and events; and collaborate with university staff. I have good communication skills, can negotiate and foster a sense of togetherness * EG: work with university resources and create clear communication channels. * IS: good communication and listen to others’ opinions, act to create better opportunities   How will you continue to support the growing number of international students to ensure a positive experience at BNU?   * EG: the university has a diverse number of international students, and it is important to keep that. Need to make changes to policies so they are supported, grow orientation programmes within the university to ensure they get the support - as home student have access to funds, international have nothing as well as additional fees. Allow native speaking so they can speak freely * AP: its delicate, they are away from everything and when they are here, they are met with a culture they are unaware of. University needs to offer British culture workshops, places for them to talk about issues, tours of Wycombe and other campuses to make a smooth transition. They should also have access to the hardship fund as well. * IS: as a foreign student herself, I know it is not easy. It is important to create safe spaces that can feel like home, would like to create weekly sessions where you can speak to her. I created a Spanish event where students felt represented which was enjoyed by all students. Holding multicultural events is also important and I would like students to come up with events. It is difficult for international students as they can only work 20 hours and don’t receive additional funds, * MG: I have family all over the world so know the feeling of being away from home. Would like to put on a parade with the flag of each country represented at the university. Also, a come dine with me type competition in halls would be a good way to break the ice between students and create a family community.   The President works closely with the Union Events team, how would you work together to organise and promote a variety of appealing student events?   * IS: creating events is important and I would create a space that students can come up and express what they want. I would make sure to be honest if it can’t be done. Would also have events in other areas of the university for students who don’t drink * AP: embrace trends that are going around the university and communities. There is a need to foster a strong collaboration so speaking to students what they want to see. The Student’s Union is a diverse team so there will be lots of different ideas. * EG: The Student’s Union has a lot of good resources but need students to tell them what you want, it would be good to see what other Unions have and looking at current trends. * MG: comes from Grenada, which has 2 carnivals so has experience of organising events. It would be good to have events that are held in different countries that represent the student backgrounds, not hard to implement.   What would you do to drive participation in underrepresented groups? (part-time, those with caring responsibilities etc.)   * AP: was a mature student with children. I would like to see childcare options within the university. Find out what events could be put on that reach out to those students. It is difficult to reach out to those students but would try anyway. If those students don’t want to attend events would still try and help them, for example but offering help with their careers. * EM: based on his own parents’ experiences, it would be down to the Union to work around them, offering sessions outside of working hours and look at what can be done to help with childcare. * IS: it is a hard question as all students want to be represented. Communication and listening to those students are key to finding out what they want to make their lives easier. One idea would be for part time students - to create a partnership with local carparks to create free parking and to offer help with transport. * MG: everyone has different reasons for being at university, making friends, building their career. Need to find out what those specific reasons are, could hold drop-in sessions to find out.   What is the one main thing you want to achieve in the role?   * MG: create a true sense of community and support * EMG: make students feel a part of something valuable * IS: be a face students can come and speak to * AP: make students feel a part of a community   Working with the university can be a slow process, how would you ensure issues get pushed through and you receive an outcome?   * EG: have excellent communication, asking for updates and ensuring the university are working on it. * AP: by being realistic, being organised and asking for support if I need it * MG: have clear strategies and plans so it can be carried on even after he has left the role * IS: being organised and realistic, one person can only do so much, ask for help and delegate. |  |
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| 7.0 |  | **Date and Time of Next Meeting** |  |
|  |  | 11th April 2024 at 5.00pm, Room S3.01 and Online |  |