

**Student Council Meeting Minutes**

**01/03/2021 11.30am – 1pm Online on Teams**

**1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies**

**Present:**

Student Voice Chair - George Williams

President Exeter – Cara Chittenden

President Falmouth – Lizzy Marshall

President Experience - Amelia Banton
President Welfare & Inclusivity – Charlotte Agnew

Education Officer (UG Exeter) - Jack Wilkins

Environment & Ethics Officer – Eilish Calnan

Open Officer (Falmouth) - Ellie Ricks

Open Officer (Exeter) - Joshua Ordu Peters

Volunteering Officer - Bethan Hone

Societies Officer - Mia Terra St Hill

Education Officer (PG Exeter) - Maariyah Najeeb
Widening Participation Officer - Emma Waldron
Accommodation Officer - Sophie James
International Officer - Patricia Lopez
Education Officer (UG Falmouth) - Isabelle Kinghorn

Fundraising Officer - Lauren Taylor
Mature Officer - Julz Preece

Gwen Scolding - Student Voice Staff

**Apologies:**

Community Officer - Kira Orchard

**Absent:**

Distance Learning Officer - Harry Bishop

Liberation Officer – Henry McCornish

1. **Welcome**

Happy St David’s Day everyone

1. **Update from the Board**

At our most recent Board meeting (19th January 2021) we:

* Approved (with some minor amendments) a new Scheme of Delegation, which outlines authorities and responsibilities for decision making in the organisation.
* Received our first update from Student Council
* Strengthening the communication between the two key decision-making bodies of the Students’ Union.
* Invited in a University of Exeter and Falmouth University representative, individually, to provide updates to the Board on the strategic directions of each university. This was so trustees could have a greater understanding of the strategies of the universities and interrogate whether our strategy as an SU reflected these. It is necessary for our strategic directions to be in-sync and responding to one another as we are interdependent organisations.

Other developments:

* Our application for incorporation has been received and approved by the Charity Commission. The coming months will be focused on transferring into this new CIO status.
* We are progressing work to create a new strategic plan for the organisation, which I will be closely engaged with as Chair of the Board of Trustees.

GW flagged that BOT and Student Council minutes should be online.
**GS to action Council Minutes. Cara to action BOT minutes.**

GW asked when bye-laws are going to be update and CC confirmed that this would be done at the same time as incorporation.

1. **Distanced Learning Officer**

GW used his discretion as Student Voice Chair to withdraw the title of Distanced Learning Officer from Harry Bishop as he has not attended any meetings or training.

1. **Update from Presidents**

Cara, President Exeter

* Decolonising the Curriculum was launched on the 4th Feb and so the survey has been live for a month now and Cara has met with staff to ensure that something comes of the feedback.
* EDI reps trained up in January and now attend SSLCs.
* No detriment policy – Q&A session on Thursday. There’s some dissatisfaction from students about this but Cara is coming up against quite a bit of resistance from University staff to agree to any sort of change.
* Cara says she’s struggling to get feedback from students about the no-detriment policy.

Lizzy, President Falmouth

* Lizzy is creating videos about lived experiences from the impact of the pandemic to help with national campaigns for Ease The Fees. She is working with NUS and arts university presidents to do these videos
* Working with the University on the hardship fund to find out what this money can be spent on as Falmouth students need industry-level equipment which they can’t afford but the hardship fund implies they have to be broke for 3 months.

Charlotte, President Welfare & Inclusivity

* Liberation Training happened this morning.
* Accessibility – Charlotte’s project to create badges for lip readers took a pause because other campaigns had to take priority due to new covid measures, but this is now happening and the badges are being designed at the moment. CA is planning distribution from the SU and ensuring they can be readily available.
* CA met FXPlus to plan a more cohesive approach on tacking accessibility together such as with the sunflower lanyards and infographics
* Falmouth’s ED&I Group approved CA and LM’s EDI Proposal to start setting up a new EDI working group.
* Work beyond LGBTQ+ History month has already started with Liberation Training.

Amelia Banton, President Student Experience

* Asked everyone to advertise Sustainability Week.
* Student Groups who are struggling with membership.
* Legends is a slow burner.
* Megan, new Student Opps Manager is starting.
* Amelie is creating a document for what society activity will look like at each stage of Boris’ roadmap out of lockdown.

**Ease The Fees Campaign**

Presidents have started getting other Unions involved (and have been speaking to other Union Officers) and have been getting widespread engagement on the Ease The Fees Instagram page from students around the country. They have also written a letter to NUS which was signed by Officers from 8 other Unions asking them to deliver a National Campaign for partial tuition-fee refund campaign. They have received a rather unsatisfactory response outlining all the reasons they knew already about why they won’t be doing a national campaign. The Presidents will be meeting them soon.

Falmouth will be publishing its expenditure shortly. Amelia will be sending Falmouth’s to Exeter to try and hurry them up.

The Presidents and several students also met Michele Donelan, Minister of State of Universities, last week. Her answer about the possibility of the government offering financial assistance to students in the form of partial-refund were very negative. She said it’s up to the Universities rather than it being a government issue. She said it’s the Universities who chose to charge 9K per year and they didn’t have to do that. There was a bit more positivity surrounding arts universities and facilities.

# **5. Road Map**

AB is finding out what Boris’ roadmap out of lockdown means for student activity and she will do an equivalent roadmap for the SU roadmap so students and societies know what it means for them at different points in the year.

# **6. Covid Mitigation Motion**

# Regarding the review of Term 1 support for students during the pandemic, Cara asked to clarify what focus the review needed. GW confirmed it was all student-facing activity and support.

Town Hall – AB confirmed MPS George Eustice and Cherliyn Mackrory said they’ll come to a meeting with Students and Vice Chancellors.

Attempt to seek rent holidays – Exeter has gone well. Falmouth is struggling with finances and decided it would be better to keep facilities open in the summer which would hopefully benefit more students than give rent refunds for University owned accommodation.

# **7. Committee Updates**

EC **–** Green Committee made of 4 students; Bio Diversity Officer, Energy Officer and Food and Drink Officer. Sustainability week started today. Over 40 free events. Film screenings. Bio blitz. Seminars. Cook A long. So much stuff!

**Liberation Committee –** Had training this morning. And Liberation Officers are invited to 1-2-1 meetings with CA.

# **8. Make A Change**

**Install a Piano On Campus - update**

Sarah Robey, Estates Director loves the idea, but we cannot do the piano in a pandemic so this is on pause.

**New Make A Change suggestions**

* Run Covid-testing on Falmouth Campus
* And Free or discounted bus fare for Covid testing

The Presidents updated that Falmouth University can’t afford to run a testing centre at Falmouth campus but it would be useful if students voted for this to help show the concern about this. Students who are living in Falmouth cannot afford the bus fare and don’t want to catch Covid from public transport.

AB said that the university are waiting to see what happens after the 1st April as the government said they will only subsidise testing until 1st April.

**Council voted in favour of this motion with 13 votes**

* Refund of costs associated with Field Trios cancelled due to Covid 19

CC is working on this for Exeter students and had a meeting with the advice team about whether there’s a legal case to be made. She is compiling a list of field trips as part of the Ease The Fees campaign and is hoping the University will agree to compensation for all students affected as opposed to every student going through the complaints process. CC is going to ask the University if the replacement activities cost the same as the field trips promised.

PCL (International Officer) said this had really affected some international students. MN (Education Officer – PG Exeter) said that PGT students are mad about this as they chose their course with the promise of certain field trips.

**Student Council voted in favour of this motion with 14 votes**

* Continue student rent waiver
* Extend the accommodation fee waiver to match Exeter

SJ (Accommodation Officer) raised this issue in the meeting with Michele Donnelan and used her own experience of living in the Sidings with Exeter students living there free but Falmouth students having to pay. AB said Falmouth can’t afford it and they have decided to keep facilities open over the summer instead which would benefit more students. Michele Donelan is going to try and do something about it. Presidents will chase this up.

SJ asked if there’s any update about accommodation staying open to correspond with facilities opening as students need to know ASAP.

**Council decided it was best to update the proposer of the MAC suggestion about all the work that is happening for this already as it is a key point in a previous motion.**

**Action: Presidents to find out about extension of accommodation**

# **9. Student Welfare**

LM – I heard from Reps they really appreciated a weekly coffee drop-ins to express the stress they’re having on their course for an hour a week and the tutors were quite happy with this and to try and help and refer them on to service if needed. It was a useful place to offload.

MN - PGT students were having coffee mornings but now students are doing their own thing to help sociialising. PGRs are also doing a coffee morning. Nothing was being done about isolation and loneliness so students are trying to do something.

JW – Theme from Subject Chair Working group was isolation from pretty much all departments is that students are feeling isolated and down and struggling to participate online. All of them had comments about mental health. Welfare is a big issue at the moment.

MSH – Distinctions between the welfare service and the wellbeing service is not clear for students so students are accessing the wrong service which can have an impact on grades and learning and can have lasting damage. Students are waiting for weeks for a reply and when they get a reply from the well-being service they’re told they should be applying to the welfare service and then they have to start from the beginning.

SJ – 1st years are so cut off that for a lot of students even connecting with the services that are there seems so hard and part of the isolation is feeling like you can’t reach out to services or people that can help. We’re just so sad.

LT - Don’t have first year engagement at all. It’s painful. Guarantee that no-one would attend a drop-in. No-one wants to do anything more online.

BH – I hear from Lecturers that they don’t actually know what their first years look like because they won’t turn their cameras on (which is understandable as they don’t know each other).

Students are surviving not thriving.

**10. Election Update**

The President Elections received a high turnout of voters with a total of 1535 voters and 4072 votes.
19 candidates nominated themselves and did brilliant and creative digital campaigns which raised important issues and ideas about how to improve the student experience. The 4 Candidates were elected to the roles for 21/22:
Falmouth President: Ben Statham Wilkins
Exeter President: Steven Preece
President Experience: Ellie Ricks
President Welfare and Inclusivity: Charlotte Agnew

Feedback from candidates has been sent to the Student Voice team about how they found the experience.

It was suggested that new Presidents could attend the final Student Council in June to do a handover (2 of the Presidents are Officers already so it would be good to add Ben and Steven)

**11. NUS delegates**

GS said that nominations for the Student Voice Elections start in a week (Monday 8th March) for the academic year of 21/22. There are also going to be elections for the NUS delegates to attend the National Conference in April 2021.

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING:**

Executive Committee is on Wednesday 3rd March at 2pm

The next official Student Council is the first week of June 2021. Council decided they would like a short meeting each month before this.