**Heriot-Watt University Student Union**

**Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 4 February 2020**

**Zeros, The Union, Edinburgh**

**In attendance**

Kieran Robson Renner – President (Chair)

Aoife Clarke - Vice President Wellbeing

Jenny Lantair – PGR MP

Alex Hedlund – MP (EPS)

Colin Aitken – MP (Open Place)

Leila Collie – MP (MACS)

Lara Stroudinsky – MP (School)

Ibikun Goke- Dabiri MP (Open Place)

Abigail Bannister – MP (Wellbeing)

**Observers**

Gail Edwards – Chief Executive Officer

Jamie Nutter –Deputy CEO

Izi Robe – Academic Coordinator

**ACTION**

**3.1 Organise an online vote for members to ratify the votes taken at the meeting CEO**

The meeting opened at 6.30pm

1. **WELCOME AND QUORUM COUNT** 
   1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the AGM 2020. The Chair introduced himself to the meeting and introduced Aoife Clarke (VPW) and Gail Edwards (CEO)
   2. The Chair informed the meeting that copies of the Agenda had been handed out and that the main rules those present could use to influence how the meeting runs were on the reverse of that paper. Any help needed with this process the students were asked to approach the CEO.
   3. Opportunities to ask questions directly would be offered later in the meeting.
   4. The Chair explained why the count took place and asked every ordinary member present to hold up their hands to be counted. With 22 students present the meeting wasn’t quorate.
   5. The Chair explained that because the meeting wasn’t quorate the meeting can’t take any decisions made this evening as Policy of the Union. The meeting could continue with the Agenda and take a vote as an “indication” of the student views. The Union would then ask students to ratify this view during the elections vote next month. To do this a vote of a simple majority is needed.
   6. A vote was taken and a simple majority voted for the meeting to proceed.
2. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**
   1. Copies of the previous Minutes are attached to the Agenda.
   2. The indicative votes taken at the AGM of 2019 were passed by an online vote of students during elections.
   3. The Zero Tolerance Policy has been updated to a Sexual Harassment Policy and is on the agenda this evening to be discussed.
3. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**
   1. A vote was taken to pass the Minutes as an accurate record. The majority voted to pass the Minutes.
4. **NOTICE OF ADDITION OF AOCB**
   1. The Chair opened the floor to AOCB. Members were asked to raise their hands should they have any request.
   2. There were no notices of additions.
5. **CHALLENGES TO THE ORDER PAPER**

5.1 No changes were requested to the Order Paper.

1. **RESIGNATIONS AND ELECTIONS**
   1. The Chair informed the meeting of the following resignations:
      1. Rahul Singh, President
      2. Raphael Camacho, Vice President SBC
      3. Nathan Calder, Open Place MP
   2. Members could approach the President after the meeting if they had any questions regarding these resignations.
2. **AFFILIATIONS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**
   1. The Chair informed the meeting that part of our Articles require us to inform the AGM of the organisations we affiliate to.
   2. The Chair informed the meeting The Student Union was currently affiliated to the National Union of Student (NUS) with an annual fee, last year, of £25,560. The Chair explained why we affiliate to NUS and the benefits we gain from doing so. The floor was opened to any questions from the meeting. No one raised their hands to speak.
3. **DATES TO NOTE**
   1. nominations for election are currently open
   2. Nominations close at 5pm, Thursday 20th February
   3. Voting will take place from 8am, Monday 9th to 3pm, Friday 13th March
4. **REPORTS**
   1. **Audited Accounts 2018-19**: The Chair informed the meeting that the Union has their annual accounts audited by external auditors. This is a requirement of the Student Union as a Charity under the rules of the charity governing body OSCR. A copy of the accounts were attached to the agenda. The full version is too large to print but is available on the website. The Chair continued with a brief report on the year’s figures.
   2. The Chair asked the meeting if everyone was happy to accept these accounts as showing the correct management of the Student Union. The meeting voted as a majority to accept the accounts.
   3. **Officer Reports**: The President and Vice President Wellbeing gave a brief report on the work they had done this year, noting that there were only two out of the usual four Full Time Officers.
      1. **Kieran Robson Renner:** It has been a turbulent year with resignations and Parliament bedding in but there have been good successes. We’ve successfully took forward a collective grievance and secured £120k in back dated pay for postgraduate students. Democratic engagement, particularly within Academic has been very positive and we’ve secured free graduations for all students across all five campuses. We are in the second year of the Partnership Agreement and are working well with the university to deliver this. We have reset the relationship with the Scottish Borders Campus and have plans to improve how we support these students with changes to our democratic structures next year. We’ve secured a partnership with Cold town and students can now get discounts in the Black Bull in town.
      2. **Aoife Clarke:** This year’s focus has been mental health and we have worked closely with the university and Advice Hub to improve services. We delivered our first mental health conference in Semester One and it was well attended by students and university staff. The theme was perfectionism in education. The university is employing 3 new counsellors and we have worked with the university to deliver 121 support for Orkney students through a charity there. We have developed a new Sexual Harassment Policy and have worked in collaboration with Edinburgh Rape Crisis and the university to implement support. We have delivered Bystander Training and engagement with this has been great. We raised money for Dignity Boxes at our Societies Ball and we’ve secured agreement that university spaces can be booked for free by students who are running charitable activity.
   4. The Chair opened the floor for a Q & A Session.
   5. **Rowan Smith** asked whether the Student Union had intention to pay the living wage for its staff, given it has recently won a pay award for postgraduate students. The President replied that Parliament had passed a policy to raise this with the Trustee Board, The Union had completed a financial review and concluded it was not financially viable at this time.
   6. **Abigail Bannister** Asked for more information about the charity support arrangements for Orkney students. The Vice President Wellbeing gave information and explained that it had been a rocky start but things were progressing well now.
   7. The Chair asked if there were any other questions. There were none.
   8. The meeting voted as a majority to accept the officer reports.
5. **MOTIONS AND POLICY**
   1. **Sexual Harassment Policy**: Aoife Clarke spoke for 2 minutes on the Policy and why it was needed.
      1. **Abbey Bannerman**? Asked whether the policy had gone to students before this AGM.
      2. **Aoife Clarke** explained that the policy had been taken to the Wellbeing Group and the Wellbeing MPs had been involved in its drafting.
   2. **Erasmus Motion**
      1. Proposer: Alex Hedlund spoke for 2 minutes on the motion.
      2. Speech against: none
      3. Summation: Lara Stroudinsky spoke for 1 minute on the motion
      4. The meeting voted as a majority to pass the motion
      5. The current policy reads:

**What will we do?**

Advocate for the UK Government to ensure Erasmus+ programmes are protected, post-Brexit.

**What is the background to this?**

On 8th January 2020, Westminster Parliament passed a bill that ensured the Government was not required to negotiate for the continuation of Erasmus+, post-Brexit.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Languages students, as part of their degree, are required to complete a year abroad. The vast majority of those students complete their year abroad through the Erasmus+ programme.

Currently, 53% of UK university students who study abroad do so through the scheme. [In 2017](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4e5c3e1c-1f0b-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search), 16,561 UK students participated in Erasmus+, while 31,727 EU nationals came to the UK.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**What beliefs motivate these actions?**

The experience of studying abroad should be protected for and accessible to all relevant students.

As part of the University Strategy 2025, we must ensure that students can develop themselves in a Global experience.

For those students studying languages, the ability to apply their education in an immersive context is of paramount importance and a very well enjoyed experience.

* 1. **Policy Lapse**
     1. The Chair explained to the meeting that the two policies noted in the Agenda would lapse unless the meeting voted to keep them.
     2. Semester One Study Period
     3. International Menu in Canteens
     4. The Chair asked that if anyone wants to keep any of the policies they should raise their hand and be prepared to speak in support of the policy.
     5. **Xander McDonald**: asked whether this year’s Semester One later start date could be an example of why there could be room in Semester One for an exam study period. Aoife Clarke explained that there was no scope to fit in an exam study period because it would mean Freshers Week would be poushed into August and this wasn’t accessible for Rest of UK Students.
     6. The Chair asked for anyone to raise their hands if they wished to speak in favour of keeping the Semester One Exam Study Period Motion. There were none.
     7. The Chair asked for anyone to raise their hands if they wished to speak in favour of keeping the International Menu in Canteens Motion. There were none.
     8. The Chair confirmed these policies were now lapsed.

1. **AOCB**
   1. There was none.
2. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
   1. It was agreed the next AGM would take place in February 2021.

The Meeting closed at 6:57pm

1. <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-has-the-government-pulled-the-uk-out-of-erasmus> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47293927> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)