**Heriot-Watt University Student Union**

**Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 12 February 2019**

**Zeros, The Union, Edinburgh**

**In attendance**

Rahul Singh (RS) – President (Chair)

Kieran Robson Renner (KRR) - Vice President Community

Lucy Graham (LG) – Vice President SBC

Craig Duffy (CD) - Vice President Wellbeing

Xander McDonald - Executive Officer (Welfare)

Alex Hedlund - Executive Officer (Academic)

Aoife Clarke - Executive Officer (Activities)

Zara Browell - Executive Officer (Events)

Yusuf Ashraf - Executive Officer (E&D)

Constanse Ursin - International Officer

Amy Winder – LGBQ+ Officer

Caitlin Cryer - Women’s Officer

**Observers**

Gail Edwards – Chief Executive Officer

Jamie Nutter – Head of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO

Denise McCaig – Student Engagement Manager

Polly Glynn – Activities Co-Ordinator

Gillian Fortune – Executive Assistant (Minute Taker)

**ACTION**

**2.2 Student asked to ratify views at meeting during Elections CEO**

**10.2.1 Inform Students re Updates on Zero Tolerance Policy President**

The meeting opened at 6.30pm

1. **WELCOME**

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the AGM 2019. The Chair introduced himself to the meeting and asked all the Sabbatical Officers and Officers who were present at the meeting to introduce themselves.

1.2 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.

1.3 Opportunities to ask questions directly would be offered later in the meeting.

1. **QUORUM COUNT**
   1. The Chair explained why the count took place and asked every ordinary member present to hold up their hands to be counted. With 33 students present the meeting wasn’t quorate.
   2. The Chair explained that because the meeting wasn’t quorate the meeting can’t take any decisions made tonight 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.

2.3 A vote was taken and a simple majority voted for the meeting to proceed. Three abstentions were noted.

1. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**
   1. Copies of the previous Minutes are attached to the Agenda.
   2. One of the Actions from the previous AGM was for the President to gain funding for Transition and to add sustainability to the remit of the Vice President Community. This was taken to Executive Committee for consideration as requested. The Union has applied for funding, we are waiting to hear how much we are being awarded. It was agreed sustainability would be for the whole of the Union to consider, not just one Officer.
   3. A vote was taken to pass the Minutes as an accurate record. The majority voted to pass the Minutes.
2. **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.
3. **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 resignation of Martin Dewar, Disabled Students Officer, resigning from January 2019, through ill health. It wasn’t necessary to hold an Election for this post.
   2. The 2019 Election would be opened up right after the AGM. Nominations would be closed at 12 noon on 27 February. Any questions about the Elections process, members were requested to ask the Deputy Returning Officer, Denise McCaig.
2. **AFFILIATIONS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

7.1 The Chair informed the meeting that part of our Articles require us to inform the AGM of the organisations we affiliate to.

7.2 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 £22,078. 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.

7.3 The Student Union also affiliates each year to UKCISA. There is no affiliation fee. Since 1968 the UK Council for International Student Affairs has worked to support international students and the institutions, students' unions and organisations who work closely with them.  The affiliation includes an advice line for our Student Advisors and we ca also direct students to use the advice line for free advice. No one asked questions about this affiliation.

1. **DATES TO NOTE**

8.1 Nominations for Election open 12 February 2019 at the end of the AGM.

8.2 Nominations close 12 noon on 27 February 2019.

8.3 Voting will take place 6 to 8 March 2019.

1. **REPORTS**
   1. **Audited Accounts 2017-18**: 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 booklet gave the full accounts in a manageable way, as the document was 28 pages long. The Chair continued with a brief report on the year’s figures.

9.1.1 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. There were no abstentions.

9.2 **Officer Reports**: Each Sabbatical gave a brief report on the work they had done since starting work in June 2018. Included in each report was a progress report for the Officer Bearers and Executive working in each area. More details of the activities were available on the website for everyone to access.

9.2.1 The Chair asked if there were any questions for the Sabbaticals. There were none.

9.2.2 The Chair opened the floor for a Q & A Session.

**Jemma Callaghan** asked about the Zero Tolerance Policy which was up for review. She did not believe it was an effective policy. She had been sexually harassed in the Union the previous year, had reported the incident to a member of staff and nothing had happened either to help her or support her. No offer of help or anything else had been offered by the Student Union. The Chair stated that all staff know what do to if a complaint is made and he was surprised nothing had been done by the Union in this case. The Chair offered to go through the complaint with the student, after the meeting, if she wished to do so.

**Caitlin Cryer** stood and informed the meeting that she had been sexually harassed in the Union, had made a complaint and had been offered support and help immediately with follow up advice given as well.

9.2.3 The Floor was opened to further questions.

**Alex Hedlund** asked the Sabbaticals what the progress of the SPA in their remits was and if there was any current measurable outcomes. Each Sabbatical gave a positive response to the question.

**Aoife Clarke** asked the Sabbaticals for details of any projects they were currently working on that involved them working together, or with another Officer. Each Sabbatical gave details of the joint projects they are working on.

9.2.4 The Chair asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

9.2.5 A vote was taken to accept the Officer Reports. Vice President Wellbeing, majority vote to accept the Report. Vice President Community, majority vote to accept the Report. Vice President SBC, majority vote to accept the Report, with one abstention. President, majority vote to accept the Report, with one abstention.

1. **MOTIONS**

10.1 **Attainment Gap**: Aoife Clarke as seconder of the Motion spoke for 2 minutes on the Motion and why it was needed.

10.1.1 No one wanted to speak against the Motion. A vote was taken on the Motion, it was agreed to adopt the Motion on a majority vote yes, with one abstention.

10.1.2 The Motion reads:

**The Student Union Notes:**

1. The black attainment gap is a long-established issue with a trend as far back as national data was gathered[[1]](#footnote-1).
2. The attainment gap exists along with other inequalities, including disparities in access, continuation and employment outcomes[[2]](#footnote-2).
3. Over a decade ago the attainment gap was established to predominantly lie with the institutions, and exists after other factors such as socioeconomic background, discipline and institution choices, and entry grades, were accounted for[[3]](#footnote-3).
4. Academic staff employed within higher education do not reflect the undergraduate or national population regarding race[[4]](#footnote-4), and in particular are missing at senior leadership levels[[5]](#footnote-5).
5. There is not parity within the sector on the courses and institutions attended by students of colour, or for black academics[[6]](#footnote-6)
6. Black students are significantly more likely to become unemployed on graduation and less likely to experience the benefits of their degree[[7]](#footnote-7).

**The Student Union Believes:**

1. Systemic inequality undermines the real value of our degrees, as well as the whole higher education sector. Race inequity cannot coexist with the internationally leading system we want.
2. The causes of the attainment gap are multiple and systemic within our institutions, and require broad approaches from both government and each individual institution.
3. Educational race inequality is further compounded by employer bias, leading to poorer employment outcomes nationally.
4. Current regulation of universities via the Teaching Excellence Framework does not require improving the attainment gap; while the issues are sector wide, approaches significantly vary by and within each university and other providers.
5. The Teaching Excellence Framework has not been adequately analysed to understand whether it systematically suppresses race inequalities outcomes.
6. Student-led initiatives to make improvements on the attainment gap and race inequity need to be sustainable over several years and adaptable for all member unions.
7. Specific challenges on attainment persist in specific disciplines and types of institution.
8. The Equality Challenge Unit provides a Race Equality Charter which equips committed institutions with a framework to make change around race inequality, including improving the attainment gap. The Equality Challenge Unit is currently undergoing significant changes to its governance and merging with other sector bodies.
9. Attainment in Higher Education in Scotland is a much more diversified topic with students of disabled and SIMD20-40 backgrounds having overall attainment.

**The Student Union Resolves:**

1. Raise awareness of the Attainment Gap
2. Campaign for the institution to take responsibility and a lead on addressing the attainment gap
3. Mandate the Academic Congress to collect information on Attainment and work with the university on action plans to target this

Proposer: Rahul Singh, President

Seconder: Aoife Clark, Executive Committee

**10.2 POLICY LAPSE**

The Chair explained to the meeting that the five policies noted in the Agenda would lapse unless the meeting voted to keep them.

Anti-Prevent Policy

Fair Trade Policy

International Representation

Widening Access

Zero Tolerance

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.

10.2.1 **Zero Tolerance Policy**: Jemma Callaghan raised her hand in favour of keeping the Zero Tolerance Policy. **Jemma Callaghan** gave a brief speech in favour of the policy. Caitlin Cryer asked that the policy be lapsed as work was being done on a new policy which would bring the current Zero Tolerance Policy up to date, and ensure any complaints were dealt with promptly and correctly. The **Vice President Wellbeing** spoke and said that the current policy was better than nothing to work with, the new policy would be done soon and then the old policy could be replaced/updated. **Ben Gellhorn** asked why the policy does not include sexual harassment of men as well as women. **Jemma Callaghan** stated that sexual harassment happened to a lot more women than men. **Caitlin Cryer** stated that at the time the policy was made sexual harassment was seen to be against women rather than men. This would change with the new updated policy.

The Chair asked for a vote and carefully explained the system of lapsed policies and what happens when they are voted on.

A vote was taken and the majority voted to remit the policy to Executive for the original policy to be kept until such time as a new policy was written to replace it.

The current policy reads:

**This Union notes:**

1. No studies have taken place on the experience of sexual harassment at Heriot-Watt.
2. The Hidden Marks report published by NUS on the experience of women students found: 68% of women students have experienced harassment in or around their institution.
3. Behaviour such as groping, flashing and unwanted sexual comments has become almost 'everyday' occurrences and normalised for some women students.
4. 12% of women students reported being stalked.
5. 1 in 10 women students has been the victim of serious physical violence.
6. 1 in 10 victims of serious sexual assault were given alcohol or drugs against their will before the attack.
7. Students were the majority of perpetrators in most categories of harassment.
8. Many woman students reported experiencing persistent harassment in pubs and club nights held at their union.
9. The defining characteristics of sexual harassment are behaviours are unwanted, persistent and of a sexual nature.

**This Union believes:**

1. The following behaviour is unacceptable:

* Unwanted sexual comments, including comments about someone's body or private life.
* Unwelcome sexual invitations, innuendoes and offensive gestures.
* Wolf whistling, cat calling or offensive sexual noises.
* Groping, pinching or smacking someone's body.
* Moving or grabbing someone's clothes without agreement.
* Exposure of sexual organs without consent.

1. Objectification and stereotyping of women do lead to a culture of sexual harassment and its normalisation.
2. The levels of reported harassment, particularly that of sexual harassment, severely under-represents the true number of incidents due to normalisation of harassment, embarrassment of the individual and fear of repercussions.
3. The students Union has a core principle to be diverse and in the context of this policy that means being inclusive to all students by striving to eliminate sexism detrimental to women students' education.

**This Union resolves:**

1. To take a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment in the Union in accordance to NUS's definition of sexual harassment.
2. To promote the Unions stance on sexual harassment through a publicity campaign in consultation with the woman forum.
3. To lobby the University to adopt the Union's zero tolerance policy.
4. To ensure a professional and credible complaints procedure in the Union.
5. To ensure all staff are aware and confident in both the policy and implementation.
6. To not display images or publications in the Union which objectify or stereotype people who fall into the protected characteristics of the single equality act 2010.
7. To include a leaflet explaining the Union's zero tolerance policy against sexual harassment in all fresher mailing.
8. To protect and respect the interests of the women students.

The President would let students know what was happening with the policy.

10.2.2 **Fairtrade Policy**: **Amy Winder** wished to speak in support of this policy. The Chair asked Amy to approach the rostrum and gave one minute for a speech in support of the Fairtrade policy.

No one spoke against the policy. A vote was taken and the policy was kept by a majority vote with no abstentions.

The policy reads:

**The Union Notes**

1. Fairtrade ensures better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.

2. The Scottish Government has ambitions for Scotland to become a fair-trade nation. Some of the measurable criteria for them to achieve include:

* To increase awareness of Fair Trade and surrounding issues
* To increase the sale of Fair Trade products
* To contribute to greater trade justice
* To engender a meaningful commitment to Fairtrade from Parliament and executive bodies

3. The Union and the University has Fairtrade accreditation by the Fairtrade Foundation.

4. That a summary of this Fairtrade criteria are:

* The Union and the University both create a Fairtrade policy.
* Fairtrade products are made available in all campus shops, cafes, restaurants and bars.
* Fairtrade foods are served in all meetings hosted by the University and the Union management.
* There is a commitment to campaign for increased Fairtrade consumption across campus through promotional events activities and materials.
* To set up a Fairtrade steering group, including representatives of the University, the Union and a relevant student society representative.

**The Union Believes**

1. Fairtrade should be supported in order to enhance the standing and reputation of Heriot-Watt University, highlight unjust international trade rules and to provide a practical alternative to farmers in the global south.

2. By being a Fairtrade institution and fulfilling the ‘five goals’ set out by the Fairtrade Foundation we contribute to helping global communities in the south work their out of poverty.

3. It is the responsibility of the Union to increase the awareness of Fairtrade products in and beyond the Union.

**The Union Resolves**

1. To uphold the five goals set out by the Fairtrade Foundation in order to maintain our Fairtrade University Status.

2. To work with the University to ensure that it fulfils its commitments to meeting the five goals set out by the Fairtrade foundation.

3. To support representatives from the Union to sit on and work with the University Fairtrade Steering Group.

4. To actively campaign for increased Fairtrade consumption across campus through promotional events activities and materials.

10.2.3 **Anti-Prevent Policy**: **Yusuf Ashraf** asked to speak in support of this policy. After the speech **Ben Gellhorn** asked about the effect the policy had on black and muslim students. Yusuf Ashraf, Vice President Wellbeing and the President spoke about the policy and the why it was needed.

No one spoke against the policy. A vote was taken and the policy will be kept with a majority vote with one abstention.

The policy reads:

**This Union notes:**

1. The government’s Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a statutory requirement on public bodies – including universities – to ’prevent people being drawn into terrorism’ and to implement the ‘Prevent’ agenda.

2. The PREVENT agenda, as part of the Government’s ‘anti-extremism’ agenda has been used to create an expansive surveillance architecture to spy on the public and to police dissent, systematically targeting Black people and Muslims.

3. Under PREVENT, lecturers have been known to report students as being ‘at risk of radicalisation’ for merely taking an interest in political affairs in class, or for observing their religion more closely, whilst politically active students have found themselves visited by counter-terrorism officers.

4. The Government’s counter-terrorism/security policy is fundamentally flawed in its approach; its operant concepts of ‘extremism’ and ‘radicalism’ are ill-defined and open to abuse for political ends.

5. The Act further criminalizes Muslims and Black people, and comes amidst a campaign of fear and demonization from the government.

**This Union believes:**

1. Islamophobia is massively on the rise across Europe, is state-sponsored and legitimised by the mainstream media.

2. The government’s identified ‘warning signs’ of “radicalisation” problematize and renders suspect those with mental health difficulties.

3. That the Act could serve to isolate many students who already feel that the only avenue through which the Government will engage them is ‘anti-radicalisation’ initiatives, resulting in further alienation and disaffection.

4. The Act discourages free expression and analysis of ideas. Academics, as well as anyone in a public sector job, should not have to be part of this surveillance.

5. We fundamentally believe that universities and colleges are places for education, not surveillance.

6. The implementation of the Prevent Strategy on campus will not only isolate Muslim students but undermine the civil liberties of other groups such as environmental, political and humanitarian activists.

7. That the NUS and UCU have both passed motions at their conferences opposing the Act and Prevent.

8. As a Charity, we as a Union are not legally bound to engage with Prevent and should seek to boycott it.

**This Union resolves:**

1. To oppose PREVENT and have a statement saying so.

2. That the student officers of this Union will not engage with the Prevent strategy or implement the proposals of the Act, and will boycott it as far as legally possible. (ie. Not take part in sessions or discussions where PREVENT aims to be practiced).

3. To work with campus trade unions including UCU on combating the Prevent strategy and its implementation on campus.

4. To lobby the university to be more open and transparent about how they are engaging with Prevent and other similar initiatives. This involves:

- Demanding publications of how the policy is operating within the university and Students' Union.

- This includes access to materials used to train staff and students.

- Holding consultations with the student body regarding how this affects students.

5. To educate students on the dangers of the CTSA and the Prevent Strategy.

10.2.4 **Widening Access Policy**: The Vice President Wellbeing gave a one minute speech in support of this policy. No one spoke against the policy. A vote taken and the policy will be kept with a majority vote with no abstentions.

The policy reads:

**The Union Notes:**

1. That 9% of students from the SIMD20 make up our university.
2. Much existing work on Widening Access is being done, this focuses on SIMD20.
3. Heriot-Watt is above the national average for recruitment from SIMD20, however there is much room for improvement
4. That the university is in talks with the Scottish Funding Council for its new access agreements for the coming year
5. Over 10% of Freshers don’t make it past their first year at Heriot-Watt.

**The Union Believes:**

1. The purpose of universities is the creation and dissemination of knowledge to benefit society as a whole and as such the university population should be representative of society.
2. That the university should be setting ambitious targets for recruitment of students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds
3. That the university should not just set targets for recruiting students from the poorest backgrounds but also looking at other issues, such as encouraging more women to apply for STEM subjects, and how we support disabled and domiciled black and ethnic students.
4. More must be done to target support for students who are at the most risk of dropping out as well as better signposting to services that are available to students.
5. More could be done by HW through outreach work to encourage students that university is an option, regardless of their background.

**The Union resolves:**

1. To lobby the university to improve its support for students who are at risk of dropping out of university through student support services and support given by the academic departments and schools.
2. To lobby the university to adopt more ambitious targets in the second round of SFC outcome agreements.
3. To engage with the university in its implementation of its contextualised admissions policy for Scottish student from SIMD20 and SIMD40 backgrounds.
4. To ask the principal to sign the “principals promise” on widening access
5. To work with the university in looking to set up a peer mentoring system and/or outreach scheme sending student back into schools and colleges, to educate younger students on Heriot-Watt, and their time at University.
6. To work with the university in order to develop an effective code of practise around mentoring and ensure that it is effectively implemented.

10.2.5 **International Representation**: No one spoke on behalf of keeping this policy. The policy will now lapse and be deleted from the Student Union Policy files.

**11. AOCB**

* 1. There was none.

1. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

12.1 It was agreed the next AGM would take place in February 2020.

1. www.hesa.ac.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. www.ecu.ac.uk – Statistical Reports [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. DFES. Research Report RW92, S Broeke, T Nicholls, 2007 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. www.hesa.ac.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy, 2015, Runnymede Trust [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. www.ecu.ac.uk – Statistical Reports [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. www.ecu.ac.uk – Statistical Reports [↑](#footnote-ref-7)