

Guild Council
Friday 4th September 2020, 4pm
Microsoft Teams Online Meeting

Election of the Guild Chair

VP Activities began the meeting by inviting the College Officers, in accordance with the Transitional Arrangements, to elect one of their number as Guild Chair.

The College Officer (Humanities) expressed interest. The College Officers present **passed** this nomination by acclaim and the College Officer (Humanities) is therefore the Guild Chair.

Welcome

The Guild Chair welcomed all present to the first Guild Council of the year.

Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Present: Guild President, VP Activities, College Officers for Humanities (Guild Chair), the Business School, Social Sciences and International Studies (SSIS), Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences (EMPS), and Medicine and Health (CMH).

Apologies: VP Education (proxy to VP Activities), VP Postgraduate, VP Welfare and Diversity, and the College Officer for Life and Environmental Sciences.

In attendance: Interim Director of Membership Engagement, Student Voice Manager, Student Governance Coordinator, Academic Impact Coordinator.

The meeting was quorate (membership +1 is 12, half is 6. 7 members present, plus 1 proxy).

Send apologies to the Student Governance Coordinator prior to meetings (will convey to Guild Chair).

Notification of any other business

The Guild President presented a student byelaw amendment proposal by a student be considered.

1. FOR DECISION: Appealed Applications for Student Group Affiliation.

The Guild Chair provided the context for this agenda item. Last academic year, Societies Council rejected a number of applications for Guild affiliation. Three groups have appealed this decision and it falls to Guild Council to make the final decision (Byelaw 7, s. 38 ,39). The appeals were considered by a Full-Time Officer who was not involved in the original decision and they made recommendations. VP Activities explained that they were involved so it went to VP Education.

The Interim Director of Membership Engagement explained the process: it gets delegated to a Full-Time Officer who has not touched it before (happens with complaints and appeals). In this case, it went to VP Education with Interim Director of Membership Engagement as staff support. Th

reviewed the applications, the decision by Societies Council, and had a discussion – the paper gives the reasons for the recommendations.

The paper by VP Education made the following recommendations:

- That the Women in Law Society appeal is successful (affiliation granted).
- That the Women in Politics Society appeal is successful (affiliation granted).
- That any previous decisions made by the same logic also be overturned.
- That the Human Rights Society appeal is investigated further.

The College Officer (Business School) asked if Council would be voting for each society individually or all of them together.

The Interim Director of Membership Engagement said that the paper was written in such a way that Council approves the paper if it agrees with all the recommendations. But Council could decide on them separately if it wishes.

The College Officer (CMH) asked if Societies Council had to give reasons for its decisions (as knew people who did not get reasons for their societies being rejected).

VP Activities responded that Societies gave reasons when rejecting a society's application for affiliation. Sometimes the students understood and accepted that decision, other times they appealed and it comes to Guild Council. Societies are considered against criteria (e.g. similarity to other societies, financial stability). With these, Societies Council considered if the existing Politics Society should be hosting the space for women in politics.

The College Officer (Business School) expressed concern that Council did not have enough information on the process to make a decision as only have the reasoning but not the evidence or possible reasons for opposing it.

The Interim Director of Membership Engagement responded by saying that VP Education was asked as an independent officer to review the decision of Societies Council to reject the applications and not the societies themselves. It is purely the decision of Societies Council. The investigating officer reviewed all the evidence to make recommendations. Council is not being asked to investigate.

The College Officer (Business School) expressed concern that they have not be trained to consider this and does not want to approve based solely on recommendation; need a framework to aid decision.

The Guild Chair suggested that there should be some pointers as to how the decision was made for transparency but also did trust the decision that VP Education has made.

The College Officer (Business School) challenged this as still would not make the voting process legitimate as everyone would not have all the facts.

The Guild Chair said it could be looked into to make it more transparent. But do need to proceed in making a decision. The Guild Chair asked if anyone had a clear objection to the paper.

The Interim Director of Membership Engagement circulated the guidelines for affiliation that Societies Council would have used to make decision. VP Education has reviewed this.

Council voted on whether to approve VP Education's recommendations as set out in the paper. The result was –

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: 1

The recommendations for the appeals were therefore **passed**. This means the Women in Law Society and the Women in Politics Society are both **affiliated**. The Human Right Society's **appeal is ongoing**.

2. FOR ACTION: Delegation of responsibilities concerning Student Activities to Vice President Activities.

VP Activities explained that Guild Council is able to delegate its authority. Previously, authority for student activities was delegated to Societies Council but it does not exist at the moment, so an interim solution is needed. It is proposed that VP Activities takes on delegated authority (not including appeals which still go to Council). It will include societies affiliations, grants, etc.

College Officer (SSIS) asked as the agenda says that Societies Council has 'lapsed' whether this meant there is going to be a new Societies Council or if it will be merged into Guild Council.

VP Activities there is currently a review into the Guild's governance, and we do not know what the outcomes of this will be. Societies Council might exist in a different form, but work is ongoing.

The Interim Director of Membership Engagement added that Societies Council and the other councils lapsed at the end of the year because of a decision of Guild Council made last year which was to allow new councils to be created every year. So, when Societies and the other councils lapsed, a transitional arrangement was put in place to remove the option for Societies Council for this year to allow the governance review to take place. The governance review will review that function to be transparent and effective in our governance. But we need a year to create that.

The Student Governance Coordinator added that no Societies Officers have been elected for this year so there is no one to sit on Societies Council if it existed. VP Activities said part of the role would be the point of representation for societies. The reason these matters (other than appeals) will not go to Guild Council is due to the volume of business.

The College Officer (CMH) asked if there would be an alternative to VP Activities for societies matters for the interim measure.

The Interim Director for Membership Engagement said that Council could nominate another elected officer, could theoretically delegate to staff, or could keep with Guild Council.

The Guild President added that it was VP Activities who has put themselves forward to take on this responsibility. The Interim Director for Membership Engagement added that VP Activities is recognised as having the experience and expertise to do this.

Guild Council **passed** the proposal to delegate authority for society matters (aside from appeals) to VP Activities by acclaim.

3. FOR DECISION: Byelaw amendments concerning students who transfer to Truro.

The Guild Chair introduced the item: Following a piece of work between the Guild and the Student Union (Falmouth) to clarify the status and improve the experience of students who transfer between the two students unions (Medics in Truro), it was recommended that the Guild amend its byelaws.

Guild Council and Trustee Board are jointly responsible for making and amending byelaws. Trustee Board have ratified these changes on 24 August 2020. Therefore, the amendments will be enacted once Guild Council passes them.

The College Officer (CMH) has been involved in this as a medic involved in societies. Thinks these amendments are a good idea – help with year of transition. This is a sensible to have a union in the locality to offer support. This will be a good interim measure.

The College Officer (Business School) asked for clarification of what is meant by Truro.

The Interim Director of Membership Engagement explaining that Truro is a city in Cornwall where the University has a medical campus. One of the medical courses (BMBS) starts in St Luke's, sends its students to Truro for two years, and then they come back to St Luke's. The challenge is that the Students' Guild is the representative body for students in Devon and the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union is the representative body for students in Cornwall. Truro is the only campus to have students go from one students' union to another (and then back again).

The Guild Chair asked why medical students are sent to Truro for two years. The Interim Director of Membership Engagement answered that is because of the facilities they have there (it is one of the main university campuses for medics). The College Officer (CMH) added that before, a few years ago, there was the Peninsular Medical School which oversaw medic training in the South West – but then they split onto Plymouth and Exeter which produced a split (Exeter & Truro, Plymouth in the middle).

Council voted on the amendments to Byelaw 1 (Membership) and Byelaw 7 (Student Activities). The result was –

YES: 5

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: 1

The byelaw amendments were **passed** and therefore ratified. As Trustee Board has already passed these amendments, they are now in force.

Any other business

The Guild President presented a paper written by a student member (who was a Trustee last year) which proposes an amendment to Byelaw 7 (Student Activities) in light of COVID-19. There is a subsection 'Guild policy with regards to societies exists to provide "structure and support for groups of students to create, lead, and deliver activities for members of the Students' Guild"'. There are certain rules and regulations that this student is suggesting Council votes an amended for a limited amount of time so that it, in their eyes, makes it easier to organise society events whilst navigating COVID. The paper gives some examples – e.g. a role may not be held by more than one individual [section 67], so if someone is having to shield, they should be able to have two people

The caveat would be that any activity that they would want to bypass has to be approved by an elected officer. The clause would be removed in July (end of academic year). People will not have had a chance to read the paper as only came through today.

The Guild Chair asked if it was an amendment to give support to committee roles due to COVID.

The Guild President said the paper was not specific – the amendment would be to allow them to not follow Guild rules. The Guild President went back to the student to see if it could be amended to be specific to deputising, but the student said that it was okay because a Sabb would approve it.

The Interim Director of Membership Engagement stressed that they are apolitical to this policy (cannot say if support it or not) because it is a representative policy. But can talk about the theory. The wording says 'the Student Leadership of a Student Group may, in the interests of the society, where an issue has emerged as a result of Covid-19, ignore the terms of an above part of the Byelaw, or another piece of Guild operational policy' on the approval of a Full Time Officer. That theory could lead to a situation where the staff of the organisation, who are paid to support societies and make sure they are financially sound, health and safety and legal, could be challenged and then approved by an officer. This gives the officers incredible power in order to bypass any byelaw set down by Guild Council and Trustee Board. The power that this grants is substantial. It also creates a loophole where byelaws can be disregarded. Would urge caution in the interpretation of this policy as it is not specific to just roles. If Guild Council approves this it would also need to be approved by Trustee Board.

VP Activities completely disagrees with this paper. You cannot disregard a byelaw just because of COVID. And some of the points in the paper about not appointing roles – you can appoint to those roles they just would not get HEAR recognition or access to society admin as the Activities Team have done that. Societies face mitigating circumstances all the time (illness, someone dropping out, etc.) this effect is not a unique situation. We need to be cautious about disregarding byelaws.

The Student Governance Coordinator said there has already been an amendment to this byelaw to mitigate against COVID. The Interim Director of Membership Engagement added that at the last Guild Council a paper was submitted and approved, and approved by Trustee Board, that made changes to this byelaw for COVID purposes.

The Student Governance Coordinator said that the Byelaw 7 on the website has been updated to reflect that change. The Guild President asked what that amendment was. The Student Governance Coordinator explained that, normally, if a society does not have a certain number of members by a certain point in term, they automatically become dormant. The amendment removed this from happening automatically (an officer now decides) as student numbers are unknown for this year.

The Guild President said that the paper was written badly (taking liberties) – the actual material impact that it is trying to mitigate, and background, is wanting an unelected deputy to have access to risk assessments. If that is what the paper was actually proposing, would not have a problem. Asked if there is another way.

The Interim Director of Membership Engagement responded and said needed more time to look at this. The issue of getting someone else into an elected role has been raised with the team. To add someone into a role, they would need to be elected in. Have not looked at the threshold for

assessments, etc., as these were also mentioned. There might be operational changes that can be made to solve the issue if it is presented to us as an issue with a desired solution.

The Guild Chair said that it would be good for the issue to be examined further and not decided today. It will be added to the next meeting's agenda so Council can be more prepared to make a decision.

The Guild President summarised the issue that these roles are elected and need to be careful constitutionally that not doing democracy as the Guild is a democratic organisation. Suggest that the Interim Director of Membership Engagement looks into it to see what can be done.

The College Officer (Business School) asked who they should go to ask questions about matters like this. The answer is either a Full-Time Officer or the Interim Director of Membership Engagement. If it is a complex issue the officers normally bring in staff; if representational, will be referred to officers.

Action: The Interim Director of Membership Engagement will look into this issue.

Action: Guild Councillors will read the paper properly before next meeting.

The Guild Chair said that it will be decided on next meeting.

The College Officer (Business School) said that they were looking forward to working with everyone in the year ahead.

The Guild Chair was congratulated on completing their first Guild Council.

The Student Governance Coordinator confirmed that dates for future Council meetings will be confirmed once timetables are released. They will liaise with the Guild Chair prior to each meeting to set the agenda.

The meeting ended at 4:53pm.