

Guild Council
Monday 07 June 2021, 14:00
Microsoft Teams Online Meeting

Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Present: Co-CO-EMPS (Chair), Guild President, VP Activities, VP Education, VP Welfare & Diversity, CO-SSIS, CO-CMH, and Co-CO-EMPS.

Apologies: CO-Hums (Guild Chair), CO-CLES (proxy given to CO-SSIS), and Doctoral CO.

In attendance: Student Governance Coordinator (SGC), Academic Impact Coordinator (St Luke's; AICL), and Nick Smith (NS).

The meeting was declared quorate.

Notification of any other business

None.

1. FOR DECISION: approval of the minutes from the last meeting.

Council voted on the minutes from the last meeting. The result was:

YES: 8

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

The minutes of the meeting of 26 March 2021 were therefore approved.

2. FOR DECISION: New Articles of Association.

Nick Smith gave an update on the Governance Review (about the legal compliance). The proposal from the Trustee Board, through due legal process, for Guild Council to approve. It would then go to the University to approve.

Key points: corrections made to some errors, introducing some flexibility, students trustees appointed not elected (for diversity of voices), clearer definitions (company law membership), and clarity around Cornwall students membership (cannot deny membership). It has been legally checked. Asking for approval and delegation of minor changes.

CO-SSIS asked for clarity around minor changes which are being delegated. NS confirmed stylistic changes are minor, but things around quotas and elections would be brought back to Guild Council.

Council voted on the proposed Articles:

YES: 8

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

The proposed Articles were therefore approved by Council and Council delegated minor changes to Trustee Board.

3. Election Update.

The SGC updated: due to a number of Subject Chair vacancies remaining from the main Student Elections, last month we held a special election to fill the remaining roles. Accordingly, the Subject Chairs-Elect are: History Chair - Isabelle Hodgson, Liberal Arts Chair - Adam Gills, Medicine Chair - Tobi Akinlolu, Nursing Chair - Jo Lethbridge, and Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology Chair - Dan Banks.

VP Education asked what is happening to fill the Art History and Visual Culture Chair position. SGC answered that it will be elected next term. According to current rules we have to keep running elections until the role is filled. AICL added that would also look at why students did not want to engage in that role. CO-SSIS asked when the election would be. SGC: to be confirmed, but term 1.

4. FOR DISCUSSION: Exams in Law.

CO-SSIS: especially with law there was a high degree of 'bunching' of exams leading to high degree of stress. Personal tutor had raised issues with the Exams Office to no avail. When CO-SSIS contacted the Exams Office directly they said that there's 750+ assessments so there will be a degree of bunching and they don't have access to student timetables. But a week later the timetable was changed and bunching resolved. Troubling that academics in numerous departments being ignored. Do not want it to happen next year.

VP Education responded that there is a lot to be learned. Officers can make a note in their report to University Council. SGC recommended that the Full-Time Officers include this issue and suggest lobbying for a long-term solution in their handover with the new Officers.

Action: VP Education to include lobbying the University about exam bunching in their handover with the VP Education-elect.

CO-SSIS: CO-CLES created a petition with lots of engagement. Co-CO-EMPS had a similar issue with Maths, and they did move some exams. More communications from academics would be helpful (exams were pushed forwards by two weeks which some find stressful). But the Law Subject Chair found that not all students want exams moved – cannot please everyone. The Chair (co-CO-EMPS) find that some are vocal about exams being moved back.

5. FOR INFORMATION: Year in review.

President: this year has been a lot of firefighting. Helpful using the themes of the manifestos (not necessarily the exact points). Getting involved in the national conversation about students (think tanks, regulators). Have spoken to more students by being visible online. Directing a lot of our lobbying towards Government has helped our profile; members of University Council respect that.

VP Activities: have spoken to more students this year. Spoke with the Cabinet Office. A year of turning bad situations into good ones – e.g. Get Connected was successful (some events had hundreds of attendees, others a handful) and meant a lot (will be growing into Give It A Go from £50,000 funding). The Guild Awards celebrated our students' achievements.

VP Education: learned how to work with student activists by facilitating direct dialogue (No Disadvantage Guarantee); other SUs shutting out activists. University was happy as meant no large scale protests. The pandemic has politicised a lot of students so will see lots of student activists in the future. Advocating for equality in education and decolonising the curriculum from the inside rather than publicised campaigns. Working on new policy for alternative assessments for disabled students. Have been working with Doctoral College on sick pay policy for university-funded PGR students.

VP Welfare and Diversity: has been strange being the only new officer and doing it in a pandemic – there have been lots of benefits including digital accessibility. Have worked mainly on student safety and have made huge strides – effective at working collaboratively with the University. Also have run regular Town Halls which have been brilliant at getting feedback direct from students to senior management. Students have engaged more with the Guild and the Officer team has been amazing.

CO-SSIS: has been a hard year – but has been good having the support of other officers and know not been alone. Have pushed forward with manifesto, despite push-back. It has been a good year for student representation.

CO-CMH: the year has been challenging, under so much work (toughest year of medicine course). CMH has probably been the least affected by the pandemic compared to others. Subject Chairs have been helpful getting the momentum going – showcases working with a great team.

Co-CO-EMPS: has been a tough year, being Subject Chair in Maths was really good as there was helpful staff. Stepped up to be CO with the support of the Guild. Congratulated everyone on what they've achieved.

Chair/Co-CO-EMPS: stepping up to CO from being Physics Subject Chair was initially daunting but have really enjoyed working with Full-Time Officers and working with College staff – seeing them listen and care through the processes. Have enjoyed the Education Strategy Group within the College.

The Chair invited the staff present to add their reflections of the year. SGC: not the year that was expected, it has been interesting and hard. The slimmed down Council (due to the review) helped the team focus on active representation support. Had elections in November (DCO), March (main), and May (subject chairs). Great working alongside such good representatives doing important work.

AICL: has been an interesting year. A lot easier to talk to students and have seen a lot more of Reps than when based in the Office. Have been working on systems (e.g. Open Feedback).

7. Any other business.

This is the last meeting of Council of the Academic Year.

The meeting ended at 14:55.

As this was the last meeting of the year, these minutes have been approved remotely.