

Guild Council

13:00, Wednesday 6 October 2021, Kolade Room, Building:One & Microsoft Teams

Notes

These notes are designed to capture key information on attendance, topics covered, decisions made, and actions assigned. It is not intended to be a detailed account of the discussions (see [agenda](#) and [recording](#)).

1. Welcome.

In the absence of a Guild Chair, GP chaired the meeting and welcomed those in attendance and outlined the discussion guidelines.

2. Attendance and Apologies.

Present

GP	Guild President
VPE	Vice President Education
VPO	Vice President Opportunities
VPLE	Vice President Liberation & Equality
CO-BS	Business School College Officer
CO-Hums	Humanities College Officer
CO-CLES	Life and Environmental Sciences College Officer
CO-EMPS	Engineering, Mathematics and Physics College Officer
CO-SSIS	Social Sciences and International Studies College Officer
10/11	Quoracy reached.

Apologies

CO-CMH	Medicine and Health College Officer
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In Attendance

SGC	Student Governance Coordinator
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
HSE	Head of Student Engagement
SVM	Student Voice Manager
AICL	Academic Impact Coordinator (St Luke's)

3. Notes from the last meeting.

The notes of the last meeting were approved as accurate and will be published online.

4. Update on actions.

Student Trustees have been notified of their approval (and are receiving training). Byelaws are going to trustee board. The recruitment of Guild Chair is ongoing. Action log at end of notes.

4A. FOR DISCUSSION: Students for Life.

On the matter of the affiliated Students for Life society (Sfl), students in attendance raised a number of points of concern which included:

- The Guild's response to the student outcry (inc. petitions, complaints, letters) has been underwhelming. The Guild is not representing the interests of students. The Guild's response has been problematic: don't know how many students on campus have had abortions – these views are damaging to these people.
- There is a limit to free speech: body autonomy. Disappointed that the university has allowed this group to have a platform. Sfl's speech is borderline hateful regarding a woman's right to choose (e.g. use of the word 'murder') – body autonomy is not up for discussion. Would the Guild affiliate an anti-LGBT or white supremacist society under the guise of free speech? Is the pro-life society in line with Guild values?
- The use of their platform oppress women through harmful comments about women's/people assigned female at birth's bodies. Their views not rooted in medical evidence.
- Campaigning against abortions doesn't prevent abortions but prevents safe abortions. Poses a threat to the safety and wellbeing of women at university. How can we trust the university to keep women safe when they support a society like this (especially with recent events of violence against women?). Gender is a protected characteristics under the Equality Act. How does the Guild support women seeking abortions?
- What is the personal view of the officers and how do these relate to the values of the Guild? What is the Guild's stance on the upcoming protest?
- How does the Guild monitor society activity? How long will the investigation take?

In response, the Officers made points including (see also [statement](#)):

- This is a really difficult topic – it is a complex and challenging issue. Additionally, the legal constraints are hard to get our heads around. As trustees and representatives it is not the Officers' place nor would it be appropriate to give their personal views on such a topic. It wouldn't change the outcome of what's happened.
- Sfl were affiliated in 2019 in accordance with the society affiliation process (not about agreeing or disagreeing with the views of a group but the administration and management of student groups). Groups with opposing views to this one are able and welcome to set up. We have lots of societies on campus – not all of them have the same view. The Guild's role is to facilitate their ability to form.
- The Guild (a charity) has to be compliant with the law on freedom of speech: we are unable to have a stance on what views can be held by groups. The Guild has a free speech policy which students were consulted on. It is a different matter on views which fall outside of freedom of speech but pro-life falls within the law. Disaffiliating the group based on their view would be impinging on their free speech and would be unlawful.
- Hate speech and harm for women come under our complaints processes, code of conduct, and values. Suspected breaches can lead to complaints. We have received a high number of complaints (we are including the petitions and letters) and will go through the investigation process as soon as possible. A likely outcome might be a behaviour framework for worldview groups to meet our duty of care.
- Every society is self-funded. There are application processes which any society can apply for grants. Up to this point, Sfl have not received any Guild funding – they are self-funded.
- Any society that has a viewpoint that falls within the law of free speech (and meets the other criteria of affiliation) can be affiliated. Anti-LGBTQ / white supremacy societies would not be affiliated as they target protected characteristics (Equality Act) and could incite violence or hate crimes. We have not yet seen examples of hate speech from Sfl – they have not said they will be violent against women.
- **ACTION:** The Guild has highlighted wellbeing resources but will look into what information on abortion we could provide. This was provided after the meeting on the Guild [website](#).
- The Guild is aware of the upcoming protest and support students right to collect and form views in protest and the Guild will be looking into how this can be done safely.

5. FOR INFORMATION: Officer Priorities 2021.

The Officer Team priorities have been created so the team can work collaboratively for the benefit of students by looking at each manifesto and came up with three themes: Safety & wellbeing; Innovation & representation; Belonging & inclusivity.

Each theme will have priorities underneath them – all working to enhance the student experience. Will be launching the themes and the priorities in the next week. The website will be updated for progress and feedback.

CO-EMPS said the Priorities align with student priorities and with the COs' manifestos. Emphasised the wellbeing theme – especially this year (already a rise in wellbeing issues).

Students suggested that the Officer team send a joint email (to cut down on email traffic) for updates and also add to website. And social media is good for engagement and discussion. FB Lives and IG Stories are engaging. CO-CLES suggested having joint officer accounts. GP said are looking at a student working group for the Guild's comms. Stalls in the Forum – the Officers have been doing 'Spill the Tea'. Meetings at different times.

6. FOR DISCUSSION: How can the Guild work with the University's catering team and events team to promote a transition to reducing meat on campus.

A representative of the Sustainability Alliance asked how much agency the Guild has on this. VPO responded that the Guild is on a Commercial Partnerships Board with the University so are happy to take feedback to that board. GP provided context: the Guild transferred its food outlets to the University so the Guild no longer has direct decision making over food outlets but is on the Commercial Partnerships Board to represent the views of students. Think about how include more students in this discussion. Broader piece of work on the Guild's role in sustainability.

CO-EMPS suggested that more people would be more likely to choose if there were more sustainable options. The Debating Society might be having a debate on this topic.

Veg Soc: Have met with the Registrar, Provost, and Hospitality and Catering Manager and made a proposal that they should consider subsidising plant-based food, increase prices on beef and lamb, or removing beef and lamb from outlets – but University is a business and doesn't want to increase prices or remove products. Veg Soc have reached a ceiling and haven't gone anywhere. Want to drive representative change.

CO-EMPS raised the issue that many of the University buildings are not energy efficient. GP said there is a debate about what is more sustainable – refurbishing or replacing.

7. FOR DISCUSSION: Coughs and sneezes spread diseases – do you feel safe coming to campus?

This was put forward with the return of in-person teaching and our Freshers' week insight showed that covid was a concern. There is a lot of discussion about in-person/hybrid/online teaching. Subject Chair for Law raised that this is an issue for those who are clinically vulnerable who do not feel safe coming to campus due to lack of mandates for masks and vaccines. Most students prefer in-person – some modules are only delivered in-person. Don't feel safe with lack of masks and amount of coughing and sneezing.

VPO responded that this issue has been brought to Sliver Policy. The University are keen for people to wear masks and urging lecturers are to remind students. GP added that we want education to be as accessible as possible but the mandate issue is out of the University's legal control. Officers encouraging students to get vaccines etc.

Does the more rigid approach to in-person teaching punish those who get ill / should there be a more blended approach for those who don't feel comfortable coming on to campus? GP responded: The University's stance is as it was before the pandemic – if you are ill you miss that content. The Guild is continuing conversations with the University. VPO added this is a big issue which we care about and believe blended learning should be an option for a number of students. Students encouraged to keep giving Officers feedback so this can be taken to the University.

Rumour that lecturers might go on strike if conditions do not improve and do not feel safe – what is the Guild doing to reduce tension between students and staff? GP responded and that the Guild is representative of students so will be consulting students on what the Guild's response would be for any strikes.

CO-EMPS have raised the pressure on study rooms with more people on campus and also allowing for distancing. GP agreed that lots of students want to study on campus because of last year so will raise with the University.

8. Any other business.

GP provided an [update](#) on the review and improvement work of the Guild's democracy.

The meeting ended at 14:30. The next meeting is at [18:00 11 November on St Luke's](#).

Action Log (as of 4 November)

Meeting	Person	Action	Status	Date closed
09-Sep-21	Guild President	The Guild President will have the approved candidates informed of their approval.	Complete	20-Sep-21
09-Sep-21	Guild President & Student Governance Coordinator	The Guild President and the Student Governance Coordinator will send the byelaw changes to the Board of Trustees.	Complete	18-Oct-21
09-Sep-21	Guild President & Student Governance Coordinator	The Guild President and the Student Governance Coordinator will work with the Appointments Committee to select a Chair for Guild Council (ideally before the next meeting).	Complete	26-Oct-21
06-Oct-21	Staff (Comms)	The Guild has highlighted wellbeing resources but will look into what information on abortion we could provide.	Complete	07-Oct-21