

Guild Council
18:30, Tuesday 25 January 2022, Zoom
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](#)). This meeting followed immediately after the Guild's AGM.

1. Welcome.

The meeting was recorded to be published online.

2. Attendance and Apologies.

Present

GP	Guild President
VPE	Vice President Education
VPLE	Vice President Liberation & Equality
CO-Hums	Humanities College Officer
CO-CLES	Life and Environmental Sciences College Officer
CO-SSIS	Social Science and International Studies College Officer
CO-CMH	Medicine and Health College Officer
7/11	Quoracy reached.

Apologies

VPO	Vice President Opportunities
CO-BS	Business School College Officer
CO-EMPS	Engineering, Mathematics and Physics College Officer

In Attendance

CGC	Chair of Guild Council
SGC	Student Governance Coordinator
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
HSE	Head of Student Engagement
HMB	Head of Marketing and Brand
HOD	Head of Organisational Development
HF	Head of Finance
AIC	Academic Impact Coordinator

3. FOR APPROVAL: The Minutes from the last meeting.

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

4. FOR INFORMATION: Update on actions.

The action log was published with the minutes.

SGC: VPO still in progress which is arranging with nightline to meet about training offer for other student group committees. There is one which has been completed which is around a variety of training particularly for people with disabilities and particular needs and differences and she's been developing some digital training as well. So that action has been completed.

5. FOR INFORMATION: Notifications of any other business.

One from VP Education as an update on UCU's balloted industrial action.

6. FOR DISCUSSION: Campus and COVID – Looking Ahead to Term 2.

Chair: This is your chance as a student to say any of your experiences from Covid, so these can be taken on board as we move forward.

GP: Awesome, thank you. I don't really have a lot to present here, it's more just an opportunity to collect some feedback which can then lead us to ensure that what we're asking for when speaking to the University is really representative of what students want. I suppose the first part of this discussion can be around assessments and exams which were taking place earlier on in January. So, if anyone sat any in-person or online exams and had any negative or positive experiences with those it would be really useful to hear about that. So, I open the floor to that.

Chair: So, if anyone has any points just raise your hand and either I or GP will call you. To reiterate, anyone can contribute to this point. All of your experiences are really valuable at this point so we'd like to hear your experiences relating to Covid, especially regarding exams.

GP: One of the main things we are looking at the moment is the deferral options for January exam period and more widely just how those deferral periods work. For January exams, generally speaking if you were to not sit that exam for any particular reason, you would then need to take that exam in August. We are looking at whether this is something students want or whether there's another option that we can ask the University for to help students who don't really want to wait until August to sit their final exams. So if anyone has any thoughts on whether they want to remain with the August deferral period, would prefer to have it have it earlier or anywhere in between, that would be really useful to hear. I think VPE has something to add.

VPE: this is something that we've been working on since the term restarted and the petition about January started up. There's been a lot of student noise and obviously we're listening to students showing their concerns in the way this affects their exams going forward.

VPE experienced some technical issues on the Zoom call – so GP takes over to cover her points.

GP: The main conversations with the University have been surrounding final year students, that's our main priority for this particular set of deferral period. Obviously, if there is appetite going forward for all year groups to have the deferral period changed from August that that is something that officers in years to come can work with the University on. But for this year, our priority is those final year students mainly because, if you've taken on employment, you've started your grad scheme in June/July and you're having to come back and do an exam in August, you may not be able to get the time off to do that, or you may be based in a different part of the country and you may not have the time to revise. Additionally, there's stress actually sending in your transcript to your employer if you haven't actually been able to finish your exams and finally everyone wants to finish their degree before they break up for the summer holidays and be able to celebrate with everyone else and feel like university is done and you have your graduation when you've completed all of your assessments. So, for those reasons we are focusing on final years for this campaign. There have been decisions made by the University that are in the process of being finalised for changing the deferral period for exams and I believe VPE was saying that these would be communicated potentially later this week, if not next week. Perhaps VPE could confirm this information in the chat? If anyone has any thoughts on that, then it would be very welcome feedback or questions.

CO-CLES (via chat): I agree I think it would be useful to change the deferral period from August to May for final year students so they can graduate with their friends and international students would not need to worry about travelling to Exeter if they have face-to-face exams, along with not stressing about their graduate schemes.

7. FOR INFORMATION: An update regarding student mental health provisions.

CO-SSIS: This is a very exciting opportunity to present what we've done so far as SSIS and I thought this would be a great forum to announce this given the fact that this might be the first in the entire UK. That's pretty exciting. So I wanted to provide some updates regarding this. So recently we've completed a mental health report alongside a variety of other independent investigations which we have conducted regarding the personal tutor system. This could not have been done without the cooperation of Dr Sarah Cooper as well as my team. So what happened with that report is that we've seen a variety of student feedback regarding well-being services and we've seen that well-being services unfortunately are currently being overrun. With this in mind SSIS has started to develop a proposal for an independent mental health grant which is to be given to students who need that extra help. Dr Cooper and I, alongside the business manager for the deputy vice chancellor of education, are currently looking at the EDI and legal implications of it, but I think in general, so long as there is a structure for it, we are able to implement it. What this means is that students who need the access to mental health services as soon as possible are able to receive it and aside from that it does have a lot of positives. It strengthens relationships within the University and the Guild but also with the University and the wider local community within Exeter as the mental health practitioners are all based in Exeter. We've calculated the counts and we've collated after looking at over 50 therapists and practitioners who offer cognitive behavioural therapy and we have come to a conclusion in terms of the sum and we have submitted this recently. This feeds in not only to SSIS's commitment towards students and the wider implications what mental health has and does impact I think to a certain extent the current stigma surrounding mental health and pushing and championing forward the notion that we need to support individuals, especially students. Aside from that, this also does impact the wider review of the personal tutor system in SSIS and through this we believe we are able to ameliorate certain issues that personal tutors as well as the institution may have regarding the personal tutoring system currently.

Let me read a comment in the chat; I have read that CBT to my knowledge is available for free at charities, what are the benefits of making CBT available? Okay, so to my knowledge there are current free services for it, but unfortunately students are not able to access them in an appropriate manner and as we have seen, there are initiatives with it but they often get overrun very quickly. With something like a grant, it's more flexible and does provide more adequate personalised services for students. Also, it is very difficult for something like a CBT service as the minimum requirement I think is 9 sessions. Therefore, with a practitioner I think it will be able to be delivered in a more effective manner, but this will be updated once it does get implemented. That is all.

8. Any other business.

GP: The update is basically that strikes are not happening in Exeter, there's not much more than that.

Chair: I think that the turnout was beneath the threshold, so there is no update. Okay, brilliant.

Unless anyone else has any further points, questions, or unless I've missed anything I believe that is everything that is on the agenda for this meeting. Thank you very much everyone who attended, keep your eyes out for something to do with affiliations because it does need that approval. If you have any further points, please always get in contact with the Guild through your various representation networks. Thank you so much for attending, I hope you have a great evening.

Action Log (as of 15 Feb 2022)

Meeting	Person	Action	Status	Date closed
09-Sep-21	Guild President	The Guild President will have the approved candidates informed of their approval. Update: done 20 Sept 2021.	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. Update: Trustees ratified changes 18 Oct 2021.	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). Update: chair appointed.	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. Update: see https://www.exeterguild.org/news/article/7222/Resources-for-Wellbeing-Sexual-Health-Pregnancy-and-Contraception/	Complete	07-Oct-21
11-Nov-21	Student Governance Coordinator	SGC to upload the minutes with a log of actions. Update: see https://www.exeterguild.org/pageassets/voice/guildcouncil/GUILD-COUNCIL-2021.10.06-NOTES-approved.pdf	Complete	15-Nov-21
11-Nov-21	Vice President Opportunities	VPO to pick up with Nightline about their offer of training for student group committees. Update: working with Nightline on this.	Complete	23-Feb-22
11-Nov-21	Vice President Opportunities	VPO will take this feedback on potential training for student group committees to the Activities Team. Update: I've fed back to Activities and I am now working with the University to develop a bespoke Disability Awareness training session for societies and AU Clubs. I am also drafting a digital training session which outlines how societies can make their social media content more accessible.	Complete	19-Jan-22
30-Nov-21	Vice President Liberation & Equality	VPLE to meet with the Voice Team to discuss the proposed wellbeing forum further. Update: met with the Voice Team.	Complete	06-Dec-21