



SU Committee Meeting – 08-03-2021

Attendance: RM (Publicity & Relations Officer), SWC (President), MP (VP), LH (LGBT+ Rep), MH (SU Rep), AJ (SU Rep), AM (SU Opportunities Officer)

Location: Zoom

The Survey has not got many responses, 3 from non committee members, so not hugely representative.

Referendum on DSU Affiliation with the National Union of Students (NUS)

RM I was confused by this as I thought we had to have a referendum every few years, it's common, so it's pretty standard. I have personal opinions on having it this year.

AJ I don't know if this year is the best year because it's so different?

MH The SU is also in the process of internally reviewing its own democracy, people could be confused

RM It is specifically this year that I have an issue with. I think we should have one coming up soon anyway.

MP I don't think having a democracy review is a good excuse to not hold a vote. Whether this is a good idea massively depends on if when (if ever) we are due for one.

MH It's hard to find info on it.

RM I think it's in DSU's standing orders. I know we had one not that too long ago

MH It hasn't happened in the last 4 years at least. 5 years would be reasonable.

JS I think the end of this year isn't the best time to do it? I would imagine it would be a massive strain on resources. Engagement is important as it's a big decision? I don't think it will be the same.

RM I think we will likely have a referendum on the democracy review already. Normally there would be a yes/no campaign. I don't think it would be appropriate for it. I don't know if we've missed the deadline for amendment.

SWC I think amendments deadline is passed.

RM I will raise this. I don't think it's wise this easter? Our survey of 3 was entirely for it.

MH I'm against it. They can just bring again.

SWC Is there any room into the SU for a procedural motion to split this into 2 motions?



RM I'll ask. I could propose one to push it back.

SWC I'm worried about looking like we are against a referendum. If enough people say it, it will be recorded in the minutes. I want it to be clear that we aren't against a referendum.

RM Happy to bring a motion myself suggesting a changed date? Me, JS, and SWC all sit on assembly so we can raise this.

RM to vote against, but support a referendum at a later date

The Future of DU Bilateral Agreements upon the Discontinuation of UK Participation in the Erasmus Scheme

RM Motion to get the SU officers to ensure the links between unis remain strong/better.

SWC Not against it but confused by motion. Some of the resolves section is odd. I guess it's fine to see them assisting maintaining links. But not against it. I'd want more clarity. Very easy to say this stuff but practically quite hard

MH It's useful as the Turing scheme is likely to be a bit crap. It could be useful in the interim. I don't oppose it

MP This is the job of the state not the SU, but it's better to have something than nothing

RM a lot of motions don't practically do much. I will vote for as it isn't harmful

MH I don't know if it would be better if it was someone other than the SU.

SWC I might just ask for clarity on it.

RM will vote for this

AM arrives

Policy on Antisemitism at Durham University

RM Good to have a definition of antisemitism. Sounds like a good idea.

RM will vote for this

Democracy review feedback

AM introduces herself. Currently her big thing is the democracy review. Results of survey came out and now we are looking at the results. Wants responses to the results. Anger about the RON, transparency is a thing. People filled in as a reaction to the RON and were a bit angry. Durham students have an issue with minority voices. A lot of ways to interpret results. Some want direct democracy, AM doesn't believe them. How do we implement that?

RM I think I've spent so long that I have any thoughts any more. Would be nice if we formally make a statement. I was on the steering group on it and I don't have the average relationship with the SU.



SWC Is this like our final answer now? I need to talk to other people in Cuth's.

AM That's fine. You could say that we want a greater relationship with SU. Officer scrutiny orders. Returning officers elected. Association presidents as part time officers? Pay to attend meetings? I don't agree with all of these suggestions. So much to say about the RON campaign. JCR presidents vs SU reps voting for colleges? Student group committee?

MH I think association president point is interesting. I could see it as giving more resources to a group of students, however alternatively are you then giving them more work to validate the extra role? Officer scrutiny panels are something we could consider.

RM I've always liked the idea of part time jobs for association reps. Often the Welfare and Lib officer finds it hard to properly represent all of them.

RM reminisces about losing an election position to the anime soc president

AM That's like one example. Governance and grants committee (G&G) - there's no scrutiny and they actually have a lot of power. Typically more confident privileged people go for roles they aren't qualified for. Could lead more into college system – have colleges themselves submit motions. Or could lean away from college – why do we have anything to do with them? Should John's have the same footing as Cuth's when it's hundreds less students.

RM No one enjoys assembly. Motions get blocked in G&G. People don't feel like they understand why. I think we need more minutes for G&G. There is the problem on assembly that only some people feel confident speaking. Whole idea of colleges having to pass motions is interesting. I think anyone should be able to though. I don't think you need a mandate to bring it. Is it an extra barrier when so few people bring so little? I don't think SU reps are well utilised or respected. Castle has mandated more training for them, which I think is a good idea.

JS I generally agree with not having to go through colleges to go through motions. College is privileged in that we get non-JCRy people submitting motions, but not everyone would feel comfortable doing so. Tons in JCRs will do so. I know we had a minority caucus beef, could be totally different in JCRs. I think it's interesting. Dem review was frustrating. On minority representation, the SU should represent all students, but some need more, so I don't think that there is an issue with the current situation.

MH I agree. SUs prioritise minority groups and it's a good thing. Not every student is going to interact with the SU. The students who aren't being considered by the SU are likely to have another community.

RM I was taken aback with how people responded to minority groups, but people in line with colleges were pro-minority representation. That was nice.

LH What do minorities want the SU to do? What else is there to do?

SWC It's not actually about minorities IMO. It's not that people are against that. It's that the SU is so politicised. People want a less politicised SU, for me it explains the gap between results and perception. They are voting against the phrasing.

RM People see it as a trade off of resources, 0 sum game.



SWC I'll take this to the Exec. I don't agree with motions through the JCR. I don't think it would help relationship, it's not where the problems are. The findings about college identity shows that the whole JCR vs SU narrative was spun out of control. I accept that JCR presidents played a part in the RON campaign, but I do think that its gone a bit far. For me it suggested that people who are most salty about the RON campaign are not well established with their JCR – it's sort of like a 3rd group excluded by all. It doesn't absolve JCRs last year with the narrative but most JCRs are on the same page.

MP I don't think the JCR sending motions should be mandatory, but it would be good if it become normalised. JCR meetings do have ok attendance, and it would make it more democratic – at Cuth's SU come we often vote on things that are controversial with 5 members, one or two of whom were directly elected, and passing it through the JCR meeting would be far more democratic.

MH I'd want same from associations. They are the biggest student groups.

MP Agree, like JSoc submitting the Antisemitism one was a good thing.

AM It's just broadening it. Frustrating when people vote against a motion without arguing as to why. How do we make it so that it's not just me and SWC? Should be talking to SU reps? Issues aren't bubbling up as we expected.

SWC If you want more debate in assembly, you need to allow amendments. Anyone can do it. Massively stimulates discussion. Tight deadlines for amendments considering its all student reps. Amendments would change the game.

RM It's very frustrating (example of today's NUS motion).

AM We need to make it clear the options for a vote. Can put up a postpone. I will be doing that for that motion. JCRs are good at simple guides. How is the SU so bad at that sort of thing? Would be helpful to get a list of responses. Thank you.

LH On officer scrutiny panels – how would this work?

AM UEA has this, they have a committee who are elected to once a term to get an officers manifesto – technically we do this with the officer updates. No real accountability with that though.

LH I don't see it having a positive impact – it's just targeting officers who already get a lot of shit.

MH It could just be a bit cruel – you can diverge from manifesto without abandoning principals.

RM Some people might agree with me – people are toxic behind officers' back, without bringing out issues to officers. Not sure why? Would have to have a discussion about how to make it non toxic?

SWC It could be broader. People like Gary. A lot of pressure on officers to justify things that are out of their control. People misunderstand what the SU officers do. I'm not against officer scrutiny.

LH Would it make it harder for the average student to go up to the SU officers?



AM Hopefully wouldn't be limiting. Broadening it out – how do you interact with cuth's trustees. Trustees aren't faces. I can't say when I've disagreed with decisions. I'd prefer a negative response than nothing?

MP I think no one would like the officer oversight panels. There's just no way someone is a passionate RON voter and is satisfied by someone in the SU bubble looking over a manifesto once a term – but I think there is a market for more scrutiny of the SU CEO, who very little is made public about.

RM I think people find it hard to speak in assembly. I hate it. Many people feel it needs to be fun. People find it fundamentally unenjoyable.

AM But JCR meetings are so tedious¹ and everyone seems to love them!

SWC There are more fun things – we have a raffle. It's the community. Again having it online is crap, but having it in person with people who can't vote coming – come with friends? Come with college groups? I think assembly feels very procedural and stripped down. I get why but still think there must be room for some fun?

AM I've thought about it more. I disliked it more in person. But also only happens 6 times a year. Very inaccessible, it doesn't allow you to get into a debate, which stops people from formulating opinions – maybe a more informal, slower pace. But if we made it every 3 weeks it could be more in the swing of it. By the time people understand it the year is over

RM I think it's about the comradery in the JCR meeting. Even if you hate them some still go. Because everyone is from disparate groups, its hard to get the community. I wish assembly was a place to talk about things we are passionate about, but it never becomes that.

MH A lot of it comes down to much better communications – explanations and a lack of understanding.

RM It's hard to explain that as an SU Rep. It's hard I don't have a solution we need to fix how we relate to the SU.

SWC It could work with just the JCR pres doing it. I think it works in Cuth's but there is a weird thing having Prescomm and also the extra rep. I represent JCR presidents but I could just override the other presidents.

RM I also hate SU Rep committee. It's good to have a link between colleges and assembly. It's hard to define a lot of things.

AM From the perspective of a opportunity – RM and SWC are the gold standard, but in terms of frustration the JCR presidents are often the best equipped to be at every assembly. Some colleges I have very little interaction with.

RM I have no problem with JCR presidents being on the assembly

AM More people on palatinate's editorial board, more course reps than on assembly – make a list of critiques, be critical and honest, and give me a list of things to do. As long as

¹ 😞



they are in line with the democracy review we should be able to do it. Sorry its so slow and boring!

MP reminisces on his term as Russian year 1 course rep. He was truly awful and started a major beef with the department that benefitted no one. Simpler times, simpler times.