



SU Committee Meeting – 19.11.2021

Attendance: LH (Publicity & Relations Officer), AW (President), KM (VP), WS (SU Rep)

Apologies: AD (SU Rep)

Absent: JV (SU Rep)

Location: Conference Room

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

WS: What would this affect

AW: They are a lot of societies, intersectional feminist society for instance, that would be bound by this law. If a society wanted to invite a controversial speaker this means the SU wouldn't be allowed to stop them. There would be a fine line where certain types of speech would be covered in this

JS: I spoke with Jeremy Cook last year and we proposed a hypothetical of a college inviting an anti-LGBTQ+ speaker to speak on LGBTQ+ rights and if they were able to speak for an hour basically just saying why they don't deserve rights what power would we have to intervene on that. He said students could protest outside the event beforehand and that is it - anything more would impede on freedom of speech. Normally if you invite a speaker in as an SU society they have to vet the speaker as a standard process but this gets rid of that mostly

AW: There would still be some vetting as it is illegal to incite violence

LH: This also affects college. Oxbridge colleges are exempt from this but durham aren't - don't know how it will affect independent colleges. It becomes a democratic issue as they can put anyone in office. The Bill is not really anything to do with free speech

WS: I disagree with this

LH: Not a motion though, SU have taken the stance that they can't really stop it, it will go through house of commons in december

JS: There was some attempt last year to keep it as similar as it is now as possible

AW: It begins to impact JCRs when we consider whether we fall under the bill. Right now some of our rules in standing orders would have to be struck off - we don't allow prejudice or discriminatory language but under this we could have someone transphobic run for LGBTQ+ rep

LH: Will probably pass, not much can be done



AW: Bill explicitly excluded oxbridge JCRs but we were thinking about writing to MPs to get us included

LH: But are their colleges independent?

KM: I don't think so as their JCRs are so closely linked to their colleges with their JCRs also involved in academic issues whereas we are just about student experience - I don't know of any being independent but I could be wrong

Motion: Harm Reduction Policy and Practices

LH: It acknowledges a lot of students taking drugs and how the university has sent around sniffer dogs, and acknowledges the danger of the current zero tolerance policy. Says Durham should change its policy immediately

AW: I agree with the sentiment of the motion, the resolves is weak

JS: Biggest things is providing drug testing kit

AW: I wanted more engagement in this motion with common rooms as they are best placed to get the materials and campaigns out to people - I don't know how I would amend it to do that but inclined to be like c'est la vie

JS: I think it is sufficient as a start to make these conversations more public - a step in the right direction

LH: Don't like the putting support in place bit

JS: Agree, the university needs to set up the structures for that, it would be good to have a few members of staff specifically for this

LH: Having good counselling services should not be an 'or' - I hate that it is put on students, both nightline and student volunteers are non-advisory anyway

AW: Submit a motion to change that to make it clear you want that burden for dealing with this is on the university in collaboration with students - we don't want students to step in to help with other students welfare it is just the situation we are in

LH: Will do, besides that we are all in agreement to support

LH to vote for this

AW: I hate that the university don't pay for sexual health supplies

LH: Also hate the six counselling session limit - other unis do as many sessions as needed

Motion: Democracy Review Part 3 – Membership and Purpose

JS: Only thing changing with Chair is that they are elected in easter



LH: I hate that only members can vote

AW: No because then DULC would roll out. Beforehand it was the five sabbs, presidents of associations, chair or delegate of each committee, a faculty rep for each faculty, one SU rep from each college, and four open places. They have increased open places to 7, instead of one student group rep we have 8 and the experience durham sabb, increased academic reps from 3 to 27 i think. One thing I'm not keen on is 4.4 of the motion, we are giving them free reign to control those 7 based on demographics which is problematic as we are giving a large amount of power to an unspecified body. The deadline in the motion says summer 2021 so it is an out of date motion. It doesn't make sense to weight by demographic - what impact are you really having by weighting? It seems a performative little tack on. If you wanted to be representative you would have more than that. Is the point of the associations not to ensure we have that representation too? I would back it if more than 7

JS: I would double check if it is a campus wide ballot as previously it has been elected in assembly

AW: That is one of the changes, it won't be elected internally

JS: All for great academic representation but if we are having the association presidents and the 7 open positions - that is a significant dilution of voice. It is difficult but it is a significant jump from 3 to 27

LH: Running for course rep you are not running to be an su rep

JS: It is different to being a course rep

AW: This motion doesn't define anything. There are 24 departments - why is it 27?

JS: What is happening to faculty reps as they are normally really good on assembly and they speak at senate?

AW: They insist on a diverse demographics but we have 17 SU reps elected by the student body bound by SU committees and execs

JS: I don't think there is enough discussion to justify 3 to 27 department reps - there is nothing in this motion which tells me why this is the major change we need. It doesn't respond or translate to the key findings from the review

AW: We need more academic representation but this doesn't say why. There is no scrutiny to how the increase in department reps will impact the dilution of representation of student groups or SU reps

JS: Department reps will be just under 40% which poses an issue - like if something minority related gets raised it could not get through if all the department reps say no when it's not related to them. Hefty chunk of academic representation when a lot of what we discuss is not academic related

AW: This motion makes colleges about one quarter of assembly



JS: Colleges need to be there and have a strong voice, however people previously have had concerns that they don't want common rooms to take over that space

AW: I agree with having common rooms be a less significant chunk of assembly so you can shift the focus more on academic issues. The SU says they want it to be more academic focused but then want common rooms to be represented through the SU but those two are not compatible

KM: I am not sure we can vote for this when the dates are wrong

JS: I would have to hear an extremely compelling argument justifying the jump in academic reps to be in favour

AW: I don't know where this motion is going with adding the experience durham sab and increasing academic reps it doesn't make sense. An attempt to amend it would be too complicated - I don't think you could. I don't think consultation on this motion has been great. Can we suggest they take it away?

JS: You can do a procedural motion to get them to take it away and bring it to the next assembly

AW: You can't do a procedural motion to refer it to a committee though

LH: I will email, if we can't amend it or get it taken away how are we voting?

AW: I don't think we should vote for it

WS: Vote no

JS: I could not vote yes

KM: I would vote no

LH to vote against this