



York Graduate Students' Association Council Minutes - 3rd August 2020

Date: Monday 3rd August 2020

Time: 6 pm

Location: Google Hangouts

Position	Name	Attendance				
		18th Nov	3rd Feb	9th March	29th June	3rd August
Sabbatical Officers						
President	Purnur Altay					
VP Wellbeing and Community	Clara Garcia					
VP Academic	Jane Baston					
Part-Time Officers						
Chair of Council	Suzanne Lengewa					
Communities Officer	Minko Minev					
Events Officer	Charlottle Lade					
Sports Officer	Ayse Ciftci	Co-opted in meeting				
Volunteering Officer	Sameer Jangam					

Colleges Officer	Elizabeth Kuria	Co-opted in meeting				
Equality Officer	Jessie Shepherd					
Faculty Representatives						
Arts and Humanities	Amy Hopkins					
Sciences	Daniel Ghete					
Social Sciences	Kristian Putnam					

In attendance: Isobel Hall (Representation and Democracy Coordinator - Minutes)
Hazel Lawrence (Events Coordinator)
Fizza Hasan.

Minutes

Chair of Council not in attendance therefore Council decided to elect a temporary chair.

Jessie Shepherd (Equalities Officer) elected as temporary chair [CHAIR]

1. Adoption of the Agenda

No changes.

2. Apologies

No apologies.

3. Co-opting new Part-Time Officers (if applicable)

No appointments.

4. Minutes from previous meeting 29th June 2020 ([PAPER A](#))

Minutes approved, no comments.

5. Matters arising ([PAPER A](#))

VPWC gave an update on the matter arising from the previous meeting about accommodation for students with caring responsibilities. VPWC raised the issue with the accommodation team and they will be updating the website with relevant information.

VPWC also confirmed that a meeting had taken place with the Equalities Officer and GSA Representation and Democracy Coordinator to discuss campaign planning.

6. Reports

a. Written Reports from Sabbatical Officers

i. President (**PAPER B**)

PRES to take report as read and open to any questions.

CHAIR: What does the viva options mean?

PRES: It currently doesn't take into account international students and their visas. These options are better for students.

ii. VP Wellbeing and Community

VPWC gave a summary of report and highlighted the following:

VPWC is working on the Student Support Fund, particularly around what evidence is required from students for this. This will be further discussed at a committee meeting in September.

VPWC is working on a campaign with the Equalities Officer on student parents/carers.

VPWC is also looking at student complaints and misconduct and the reporting system for this.

No questions asked.

iii. VP Academic (**PAPER C**)

VPA gave a summary of report and highlighted the following:

The Library has reopened and videos have been published which VPA featured in.

VPA has focused work around working with the Library to open up study spaces and their click and collect service. VPA is also looking at study spaces more widely and what is available across campus.

VPA told the Council that the University is looking at January starts for some masters programmes.

VPA updated Council that the GSA have put in a successful joint bid with YUSU for student voice assistants project

Question:

Communities Officer: You mentioned that the library has reopened which is awesome. Do you have any information about other study spaces that might open up i.e. lab spaces.

VPA: It took a lot to get the library open. Masters will not be allowed back in to do any academic research this academic year. But the University are opening up research areas for research students. This might be slightly different at departmental level so recommend getting in touch with the department. The University seems to be focusing on the incoming year

and how they can open up spaces but not for the outgoing year, there is the assumption projects are online and can continue this way.

PRES: The University will open up 25% capacity in September. Less study spaces will be seen such as lecture rooms etc. We are working on it and focusing on providing equal opportunities.

Communities Officer: The projects have not moved online but have stopped for some students. All practical work has been halted. Initial response from the department is that they plan to do a schedule reopening of the labs so students can still work on their projects. Understanding now that this will no longer be possible?

VPA: I would advise them that but to get in touch with their department. Some departments may be able to get back on campus i.e. music has gone back. Currently looking at the potential for masters students who have been negatively impacted to go back at a later point to get those experiences.

Communities Officer: that does answer the question. I received an email not long ago that it should be possible to ask for an extension. Does this offer still extend going into the next academic year?

CHAIR: In the interest of time, this can be taken outside of meeting and discussing a potential campaign as this is an issue that does need to be brought to the university.

Communities Officer: Thank you Jane, I was just trying to get an understanding of what steps are available for people who need to use the equipment in TFTI. Failure from the department to address issues that ultimately impact the essence of the degree (changed from practical work to theoretical) might be hard to explain to the students. The extensions which were allowed for our specific department were limited to the date of submission of the dissertation only. I would be happy if we can continue this discussion.

Faculty Representative Arts and Humanities: These issues have been brought up at the faculty learning and teaching group. They are trying to figure something out and give hope because things will slowly reopen. But there is no firm decision on what will be opened up as things are changing week by week. It is a matter of health and safety.

PRES: in the most recent postgraduate contingency group, a paper passed on allowing students to discuss what has impacted their research. Happy to elaborate outside of meeting.

Fizza Hasan: I want to bring up an issue about this and family housing. We are seeing a housing crisis. I have contacted the accommodation team once I had an extension approved and they were dismissive. They did not want to change my contract and it feels like there is no one to talk to.

CHAIR: I live in family housing as well. It has been a major issue and we have been raising it to the university.

VPWC: Thank you for coming and taking the time to explain. We need to resolve if students need to overstay their contracts. A solution is to forward me emails and conversations you have had so I can chase it up and will mention it to the accommodation team and VC to discuss your individual case.

PRES: This is something on our radar about family housing and on campus accommodation. University is working with external providers. We asked them when COVID situation happened to allocate rooms for continuing students so they won't be stressed looking for short term accommodation. This was rejected because the University would be liable to pay for accommodation. There is no resolution just yet.

b. Verbal Reports from Council Members

CHAIR: We are pressuring the University about students with caring responsibilities as a main project. There is not much movement but there are a lot of issues. We had a recent meeting where people expressed that it is their own fault for having caring responsibilities. We brought up that older adults are falling ill and partners of students are falling ill. Students are put in a care taking role now that they didn't choose. Met last week to change policy when it comes to asking extensions. They plan to change it across the board for UG and PG. We are pushing to get away from the burden of proof as the University is assuming they are all trying to game the system.

VPWC: We are issuing guidance on how to deal with students with caring responsibility and would like to see a student support plan.

CHIAR: There was a committee formed for students with caring responsibilities. We have raised issues that affect care leavers or students from different backgrounds such as immigration status and applying for leaves of absence for mental health issues. It is very difficult for international parents. The University needs to do a better job at quality and inclusiveness.

VPWC: We have asked for targeted communications for families. The family network for GSA is the only meeting where student support services talk to students.

7. New General Business

- a. M.1920 - 05 Motion to approve the creation of new GSA Networks [\(PAPER D\)](#)

VPWC: Together with the Events Coordinator and Communications and Design Coordinator we have been reviewing how GSA Networks work. We felt that they are academic centered and would like networks to have more liberation groups and to be more activity based.

Questions:

VPA: Where is the student consultation in this? I don't see any evidence of current network coordinators being consulted or evidence that students want these new networks. Also, how does this reduce the burden or responsibility of Network Coordinators? There is no role description to look at. Also, I want to know if we are changing how Network Coordinators are done, will they be appointed or elected?

CHAIR: What is being proposed? Is this for implementation now or in the future?

VPA: There are two main issues. There doesn't seem to be any firm definition of what a network is. Are liberation groups connected with part-time officers or can they implement change? Secondly, we are getting rid of networks without consulting students. The PhD and the Masters networks are missing from the list.

Events Coordinator: In regards to how it works, the by-laws have more to do with that.

VPWC: The By-Law explains the planned process for network coordinators. We will also not just have only facebook to communicate with.

Faculty Representative Arts and Humanities: We are asking lots more students to get involved coming off the back of a year where we haven't had much engagement. Students are not going to flood on campus and have the same connection they have had previously. Some of these networks are based on going out and connecting with large groups. GSA needs to focus on engaging with students on a way that is tried and tested

Amendment: PhD network added to the list.

Voting:

For: 0

Against: 7

Abstain: 0

Motion fails.

ACTION: Council to send feedback to VPWC about Networks

Events Coordinator: Networks are not designed to meet up in person. There is a lack of direction from university about how students can connect. This is not to multiply to get students to do more, this is to provide more spaces for students to make meaningful connections.

- b. M.1920 - 06 Motion to update, change and add new additions to the York GSA By-Laws for Association Council to approve. [\(PAPER E\)](#)

PRES: There are a number of by-laws we would like to change. We currently have 3 that are published. We would like to elaborate on aspects of how the GSA is being run and how students can do activity so we can be more transparent and accessible.

Questions:

VPA: Is the Part-Time Officer list in the Association Council By-Law correct?

Representation and Democracy Coordinator: There is a separate proposed By-Law with Part-Time Officer roles, so this section would be removed from the Association Council By-Law.

VPA: Where are the percentages from in the referendum and petitions By-Laws?

Representation and Democracy Coordinator: This comes directly from the Articles. If Council wished to change this they would have to amend the Articles.

Council members voiced concerns that they hadn't had time to properly read through the papers and therefore feel comfortable voting in the meeting. Also, some members had difficulties accessing the documents. Moreover, the limited time that the meeting had left members felt they wouldn't have sufficient time to discuss the motion properly.

ACTION: It was decided by Council that they would vote on this motion via email in order to be given more time to consider the motion and ask any further questions.

Email Vote:

Election Rules and Regulations (Passed)

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Election Committee (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Principal Officer Team (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Accountability (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Association Council (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Part-Time Officers (Passed)

Yes: 5
No: 0
Abstain: 1

Petitions (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Referendum (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Motions (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Policy (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Your Ideas (Passed)

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstain: 0

Networks (Passed)

Yes: 5
No: 0
Abstain: 1

Motion Passes

8. Any Other Business (AOB)

There was no other business.

Matters Arising :

Number:	Action	Status
1	Council to send feedback to VPWC about Networks	
2	Council Members to vote on M.1920 - 06 (Motion to update, change and add new additions to the York GSA By-Laws for Association Council to approve.) via email and ask any further questions.	

9.

