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Students’ Representative Council

Minutes

24th October 2023 Ustinov, Bonar Hall & Microsoft Teams (Hybrid)

Attendance

Zainab Adeleye (BME), Paul Eluwa (EDW), Elise Coubrough (Disabilities), Funmilayo Owa (Womens), Nicole Bryon (Environment & Sustainability), Cynthia Christopher (Housing), Rafat Ahmed Imitiaz (Facilities), Kolev Oggy (Student Parent), Esther Ajayi-Akinsulire (First Year), Saga Hamdan (International), Aniekeme Uwah (Mature), Prashant Kumar (Employability), Samuel Lincoln-Bassey (Taught Postgraduate), Rajat Mittal (General), Tosan Akpituren (General), Seemab Zafar (General) ,Alice Saville (SU President), Ian Bueger (IMC)

School Presidents

Conor Heward (Business), Lucas Fonseca (Health Sciences), Dani McFawns (SSHL), Erin MacInnes (SSHL), Ridvan Kucuk (Life Sciences), Marlon D'Ambrosio (Science and Engineering)

Executive

Ash Mutembwa (President), Mubarak Babalola (VP Academia), Yaa Agyei-Akwa (VP Fundraising), Nicole Okoro (VP Representation – acting chairperson), Manaswi Budhathoki (VP Community), Bernard Aihevba (VP Student Wellbeing), Parissa Robinson (VP Student Activities)

Guests/Observers

Blair Grubb (VP Education), Cheryl- Ann Cruickshank (Chief-Executive Officer), Chris Gourley (Head of Operations and Student Experience), Kellie Ioannou (Business Support Manager), Michael McLean (Digitial Content Creator), Anthony Orisakwe Modestus (BME Co-option candidate), Idem Oto-Obong ( Student Parent Co-option candidate), Simpson Victoria (Student Parent Co-option candidate), Tanaiste Custance (Motion Proposer), Rupita (Student Observer from the School of Medicine), Adheeb (Student Observer), Osman (Student Observer), Ahmed (Student Observer)\*\*

\*\* Unfortunately, due to unprecedently high attendance not all student observers were formally recorded, there was an estimate of ~100 student observers joining the meeting in person and online.

Apologies

Leia McKenzie (LGBT+), Marcus Flucker (Learning & Teaching), Matthew Fancourt (Dentistry), Joanna Walke (DJCAD), Dominic Lee (Medicine), Keith Harris (Rector), Keith Winters (Rectors Accessor), Hamish Fraser (SRC Chairperson)

## Minute-taker

Loukia Morari (Policy and Research Officer).

**1. Welcome**

1.1 Kellie announced the unique circumstance that the SRC chair had sent his apologies. She continued to explain that since this was the first SRC of the academic year and a Vice-Chair had not yet been appointed. The VPR, Nicole, would be chairing the meeting as per the bylaws and therefore acting as an impartial facilitator out with her VPR capacity. There were no objections from the council to this arrangement.

1.2 Nicole welcomed the council to the first SRC of the year and expressed her enthusiasm for working with its members. She then read out Hamish’s apologies and welcome that expressed his intention for the SRCs year ahead as a productive mechanism for students to use their voices and represent their student community.

1.3 Nicole announced that the meeting was being recorded. There were no objections from the council to this arrangement.

**2. Blair Grubb**

2.1 Nicole welcomed Blair to present. Blair explained that he joins the SRC meetings to hear student concerns and feedback for ongoing university projects. He said he would be covering three things: the National Student Survey (NSS), the drugs crisis project and the Israel – Gaza crisis.

2.2 Blair expressed that the University of Dundee did not perform as well as the previous year in the NSS with some disparities between different schools and departments. He continued to state that schools have plans to improve the student experience in education and encourages them to give feedback on what they think of these plans, highlighting the importance of their input. He then thanked the 1500 students who completed the pulse survey which was held in weeks 3-4 of the semester. He explained that the results were being analysed, to listen to student views during this time to improve in the second half of the semester.

2.3 Blair then referenced the student led drugs crisis project brought to the university the previous semester. He noted that the university had been working closely with DUSA to prioritise the actions recommended in the Drugs Crisis Community Action Project and act accordingly with consultation with the Universities UK.

2.4 Blair then moved on to acknowledge the University’s response to the Israel – Gaza crisis. He stated that two statements had been published on the issue that abhor the violence that is happening in Gaza. He continued to state that he had met with the Principal that afternoon and in addition to the statements the University is calling for an immediate cessation in the hostilities to allow for a period of reflection and a negotiated settlement in Gaza. Additionally, that the university calls for an immediate lift in the amount of humanitarian support going to Palestinians in Gaza. He noted that there are strong views amongst both communities, and he wanted to draw the council's attention to the piece of work the University had done on [freedom of expression](https://ctil.dundee.ac.uk/kb/freedom-of-expression/#freedom-of-expression) that he hoped would guide the evenings' debate in a respectful manner. He recognised that DUSA is a separate organisation from the University but expressed that this work is used by the University in the classroom as a guide for respectful debates.

2.5 Blair asked if there were any questions. Saga asked for clarification around the call for humanitarian aid without the call for an immediate ceasefire. Blair clarified that the University is calling for both an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian aid. There were no more questions from the council. Blair thanked the council for listening.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting**

3.1 Minutes of 16th of May

- Proposer: Ash

-Seconder: N/A

**4. Action Tracker**

-Proposer: Ash

-Seconder: N/A

**5. Co-options**

5.1 BME; Nicole called on the candidates running for BME rep. Zainab Adeleye was the first candidate to present. Zainab expressed the importance of effective representation and why she thought she was the best candidate for the position calling on her experience as a member of the Scottish youth parliament. Anthony Orisakwe Modestus was the second candidate to present. Anthony expressed that diversity is one of the student communities' biggest strengths and why he thought he was the best candidate for the position promising to be a dedicated advocate promoting equality and inclusivity for all BME students.

5.2 Women’s; Nicole called on the candidates running for Women’s rep. Owa Funmilyao was the only candidate to present. Owa expressed the importance of addressing the gender-based inequalities specifically faced by women and why she thought she was the best candidate for the position ensuring that women have the best learning experience possible at the university.

5.3 Student Parent; Nicole called on the candidates running for Student Parent rep. Idem Oto-Obong was the first candidate to present. Oto expressed the importance of accessible academic pursuit for all students irrespective of race or status and expressed why he thought he was the best candidate for the position. Kolev Oggy was the second candidate to present. Kolev expressed that he was a father of two and a half and explained the importance of action and care as a representative. Victoria Simpson was the third candidate to present. Victoria introduced herself as the previous year's mature rep, calling on her experience as a union rep and manager, both of which equipped her skills she intended to bring to the council again.

5.4 Facilities; Nicole called on the candidates running for Facilities rep. Ahmed Imtiaz Rafat was the only candidate to present. Ahmed expressed the importance of adequate facilities available to students focusing on the library facilities, aiming to make it equipped with the latest resources and centering student wellbeing.

**6. Appointment of Vice-Chairperson**

6.1 Nicole announced the appointment of Vice-Chair opportunity to the council. Then welcomed Paul who expressed his interest and explained why he was a suitable candidate for the position. Paul introduced himself and called on his experience as a previous member of a student representative council, a director of welfare in student union government and director of sports national association of Nigerian students. He believed these assets would make him an experienced candidate for the position.

**7. Israel – Palestine War Motion**

7.1 Nicole reminded everyone that the motion was a sensitive topic and called on participants to remain respectful during the discussion and allow all parties to contribute without interruption. She then welcomed Tanaiste to present this motion proposal, he was joined by Saga.

7.2 Tanaiste opened the discussion by asking participants to say peace in Arabic, Hebrew and English and asked for a moment of silence for the death caused by this conflict.

7.3 Tanaiste continued to introduce the motion which called upon the University and DUSA to take a particular stance on the conflict. He then said that to his knowledge, despite what was mentioned by Blair Grubb earlier in the meeting a public statement had not yet been circulated by the University on their website. He explained that the motion called on the University and DUSA to release a statement that directly and specifically condemn the causes of the conflict; the occupation of Palestine and the siege of Gaza which did not start three weeks ago but since 1948. He called on DUSA to help educate students politically on what/ why this is happening and to reach out to An-Najah National University in Nablus since Dundee is a long-standing twinning town with the Palestinian town.

7.4 Saga stated that in addition to condemning the war crimes and genocide in Gaza she called on the University and DUSA to request and immediate ceasefire. She explained that since the 7th of October the Israeli army requested 1million Gazans to evacuate the North of the Gaza Strip to the South (considered a safe zone) while continuing to bomb the humanitarian pathway between these parts of the strip and the safe zone. She explained that this, along with the siege of the Gaza strip, is a war crime which cannot be justified with self-defense. Saga continued that places of refuge are also being targeted, hospitals, churches and mosques. She then called out the University’s neutrality to the situation and condemned the complicity of the British media for adopting Israeli propaganda methods to misinform its citizens about the situation. She summarised that the motion was calling on the University and DUSA to issue statements that condemns the war crimes and the genocide in the Gaza in a similar manner to what was released for the Ukrainian – Russia conflict.

7.5 Nicole opened the floor for discussion. Rupita from the School of Medicine noted some of the discrepancies in the use of language in the statements between the Ukrainian – Russian war and the Israeli occupation of Gaza and other Palestinian territories. She stated that the students call on the end of continuous subjugation, suppression and oppression of minority and indigenous people. She stated that students are startled that a University situated in Scotland, which also has a colonial history of being oppressed, can remain silent on the matter. She called on the University to act in parallel with how they responded to the war in Ukraine. She shared her experience as a 3rd year medic working with Ukrainian students, refugees and sister universities during her second year of study. She expressed her disheartenment to the lack compassion extended to the Palestinian occupation from the University. Lastly, she stated that this should not be an issue of colour, this is a humanitarian issue, and the University must recognise that it is not a war, it is not a conflict, it is occupation and oppression.

7.6 Adheeb then spoke up as a representative of the student body and wanted to express his frustrations, that of his cohort and his colleagues. He challenged the viewpoint that this is a complicated issue, he asked what more students need to be doing to simplify the issue. He continued to say that everyone in the room can agree that the death of any civilian, the death of any children is bad. He stated that what has happened has not been unprovoked. He stated that when Ukraine fought back the University was able to stand with Ukraine and condemn that Acts of Russia and the invasion. He reiterated that what has been happening in Palestine has not been happening for a month but 75 years and when Palestine decided to stand up, that’s when it became a complicated issue. He urged the University, DUSA and the student body to see it for a genocide, occupation and colonisation. He called on them to stand against and condemn the Israeli state, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) for the war crimes they are committing. He also stated that it is asymmetrical violence and should be treated as such.

7.7 Osman wanted to reflect on the university's response during the Ukraine – Russia conflict, of which he stated there were 17 messages over the course of the first two months of the of the war talking on the issue. Firstly, he stated there was a humanitarian fund that was established to help students and staff seeking refuge from countries with ongoing conflicts. He noted that this was offered to students from Ukraine and Afghanistan, but it had not yet been extended to scholars from Palestine. He referenced the university’s initiative for student transferals from Ukrainian universities and asked where the same support for Palestinian students in Dundee’s twinning town of Nablus was. He noted that there had been support groups for students and staff, he asked where the emails were for the support groups for Palestinian staff and students. He noted that a student services director had been allocated to support students affected by the Ukrainian conflict. He asked where the representation was for Palestinian students.

7.8 Ian introduced himself as the Independent Member of Court. He recognized the discussion was on civilians trapped under siege in bombardment, ethnic cleansing and displacement. He then asked why the same attention had not been given to Armenia and Azerbaijan. He then argued that Israel is treated differently and stated that he could not support the motion as it stands unless it was open to amendment to mention Hamas and condemn the actions of Hamas and the war crimes, they have committed. He also recognised that participants should be able to respectfully disagree.

7.9 Ahmed argued that framing the situation from the 7th of October with the actions of Hamas is a mistake. He continued to share what is happening in the West Bank where there is no Hamas, he noted that in the last 10 days 1200 people were imprisoned in Israeli jails: with 170 Palestinian children, 300 women. He stated that the West Bank had been divided into three blocks that were being monitored and governed by the Israeli state. He also stated that 70 people have been killed in the West Bank where there are no members of Hamas.

7.10 Nicole closed the discussion and announced that the voting forms were now available on the team's channel for councilors to vote.

**8. Results of Votes**

8.1 Co-options; Loukia announced the votes for the BME representative – 20 overall votes, 16 votes for Zainab, 2 abstentions and 2 R.O.N. Loukia congratulated and introduced Zainab as the new BME representative.

8.1.1 Loukia announced the votes for Women’s representative – 20 overall votes, 16 votes for Owa, 1 abstention and 3 R.O.N. Loukia congratulated and introduced Owa as the new Women’s representative.

8.1.2 Loukia announced the votes for Facilities representative – 20 overall votes; 16 votes for Rafat, 2 abstentions and 2 R.O.N. Loukia congratulated and introduced Rafat as the new Facilities representative.

8.1.3 Loukia announced the voted for Student Parent representative – 21 overall votes, 4 votes for Oto, 8 votes for Kolev, 8 votes for Victoria and 1 R.O.N. Loukia announced a tie and welcomed Victoria and Kolev to give one-minute speeches to present why they are the most suitable candidates. Victoria and Kolev presented their arguments. Loukia asked the council for a show of hands and introduced Kolev as the new Student Parent Representative.

8.2 Appointment of Vice-Chairperson; Loukia announced the votes – 19 overall votes, 13 votes for Paul, 2 abstentions and 4 R.O.N Loukia congratulated and introduced Paul as the new vice-chair of the SRC.

8.3 Israel – Palestine Motion; Loukia announced the votes – 20 overall votes, 12 votes in agreement, 1 rejection and 7 abstentions. Loukia then announced the motion passed by the SRC.

**9. Exec Update – Questions**

9.1 Nicole welcomed Ash to speak on the executive update. Ash explained that a second statement on the Israel- Palestine crisis had been released in elaboration of the Executives first statement that offered welfare advice for students. She stated that first and foremost, their priority is to provide advice and support for all students. She continued that following the feedback the Executive received from the students they did more to recognise the situation. She also recognised that some students could have been working in collaboration with Executives or other society committees in order to make their voices heard. She then opened the floor for questions.

9.2 Tanaiste asked the Executive if they would be implementing their part of the motion that relates to them and the organisation. Ash stated that under the Education Act the Executive are unable to formally put out a political stance in the name of the organisation. She stated that the Executive fill their capacity as members of the organisation centering the needs of all 19,000 students they represent, irrespective of their own personal opinions. She continued to show her appreciation for the number of students who showed up to raise their voices at the SRC and stated she stands in solidarity with them all.

9.3 Osman asked Ash directly if the motion passed during the meeting, in a democratically structured organisation and country, would be implemented and to what extent. Ash stated that the matter would have to be discussed with the Executive and the board of trustees as she would not be able to speak on behalf of the Executive and organization as a whole. Osman then asked for clarification of the next steps of the process. Ash explained that since the motion had passed the discussion would move on to the board of trustees where it would be decided whether the motion would be implemented. Kellie then clarified that that applies to DUSA specifically and noted that the University could take another course of action.

9.4 Ahmed wanted clarification of the role of DUSA and questioned why, if this motion had been passed in a democratic manner by the student representatives, would it not be embodied by the Executive and organisation. Ash explained that the board of trustees is comprised of 14 members, 7 who are the elected Executive and 7 external members who bring different expertise and knowledge to the organisation. She explained that the role of the board of trustees is to govern the whole organisation to ensure that it runs in line with its charitable objectives. Therefore, passed motions at the SRC are taken forward at the discretion of the board of trustees.

9.5 A student observer asked if students, societies or student groups would be able to demonstrate on campus about the issue. Ash stated that students would have to ask for permission from the University estates team before holding demonstrations on campus. The student asked a follow-up question about whether the University would be releasing a statement condemning the acts of the Israeli state and Hamas while expanding on the clarity of what is happening in the Gaza strip. Ash reminded them that she cannot speak on behalf of the University, that DUSA is independent from the University.

9.6 A student observer asked if the discussion on the motion at board level would be made public. Kellie explained that minutes of the DUSA board of trustee meetings are not published publicly and that ultimately actioning the motion would be at the discretion of the board of trustees. The student then asked if there would be updates on the discussion had. Kellie the continued to say that anything with regards to the SRC would be taken to the board of trustees by the Executive and the SRC chairperson (board of trustees' observer) as a subsequent discussion point. She explained that subsequent updates would be relayed back to the SRC by the SRC chairperson and the Executive.

**10. AOCB**

10.1 Nicole asked if there were any further questions. She then thanked the council and students for coming and reminded them that the next SRC was scheduled for the 14th of November.