

Goldsmiths SU Student Assembly 18th April 2016

5.30pm, Ian Gulland Lecture Theatre

All students must bring their student ID in order to enter the meeting

Safe space policy

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1

2. Apologies

2.1

3. Approval of the minutes from the last meeting. (page 2- 8 In this document)

3.1.

4. Motions (pages 9-13 in this document)

4.1 Support the Rent Strike (page 9)

Proposer: Liam Renouf

Secunder: Felix Porter

4.2 Boycott Zabłudowicz (Page 10 – 11)

Proposer: Tara Mariwany

Secunder: Alessia Cancemi

4.3 Motion to for the SU to adopt the Right2Debate policy procedure (Page 12 – 13)

Proposer: Asher Fainman

Secunder: Shazeah Elahee

5. Officer report

5.1

6. Special report (page 14-15 in this document)

6.1 Finance Report

7. Smiths & Leopard Editor elections

8. Bye Election Proposal (page 16 on this document)

8.1

9. Solidarity Motions

9.1

10. Any Other Business

Goldsmiths SU Student Assembly 25th February 2016

5.30pm, Main Hall – Minutes

All students must bring their student ID in order to enter the meeting

Present: Danny Nasr (Education Officer/ Acting President) Liam Renouf (Housing Officer/ Acting Chair)

Polu mcewan (LGBTQ Officer) Luize Lazdanes (Student Trustee) Alice-india Garwood (Womens Officer) Serena Savini (Womens Officer) Natasha Shehata (Wired Radio manager) Felix Porter (Housing Officer) Lynsay Hodges (Campaigns Coordinator) Kiona Niehaus (Postgraduate Students' Officer)

In Attendance

Jennifer Hart (Deputy CEO) Graham Gaskell (CEO) Josh Habimana (Democracy Engagement and Policy Cordinator)

11. Safe Space policy: The chair read out the safe space policy.

12. Welcome and Introduction (2mins)

In the absence of the regular chair of the Student Assembly, Liam Renouf who is the Housing Officer was elected as chair for the meeting.

The new Democracy Representation & Policy Coordinator introduced to the Student Assembly

1.1 *Safe space policy was read out.*

13. Apologies (1min)

1.2 No apologies had been sent

14. Approval of the minutes from the last meeting.

3.1 There has not been a Student Assembly since November 2015. Minutes were on line and Student Assembly members were requested to send any corrections to the Democracy, Engagement and Policy Coordinator (josh.habimana@goldsmithssu.org) if there are any corrections and the minutes would be assumed to be correct if there are no corrections sent.

15. Motions (15 mins)

4.1 Scrap Trident – spend the money on jobs, education and public services.

Katherine proposed the motion.

The motion to scrap Trident was discussed, Katherine advised that there is a demonstration on the 27th Feb that students can support. Katherine clarified that the cost of Trident over time will be 100 bill.

There was no discussion of the motion so it moved to voting

- 5 29 voted for the motion
- 6 0 voted against
- 7 1 Abstained

The union resolved the following

1. To campaign against replacing Trident and for nuclear disarmament on the basis set out above.
2. To publicise the demonstration against Trident on Saturday 27 February.
3. To submit this motion to NUS Conference 2016 and to mandate NUS Executive to facilitate Constituent Members to campaign for money to be spent on free education, jobs and services instead of nuclear weapons."

16. Officer report (20 mins)

5.1 Oral report

Daniel Nasr (Education Officer and Acting President) updated on the following:

- Demonstration against Trident is on the 27th Feb and students from Goldsmiths Students Union were attending and were encouraged to attend.
- There has been double the budget for student Activities
- Varsity has also had an increase in the budget.
- DN has also been working on changing the refugee free refugee status who are currently classified as international students and the fees have been negotiated to 9K but he is going for even lower.

- DN is also working on psychosocial therapy through art for refugees who have been through traumatic experiences.
- DN is also attending various committees and organising a meetings for students and the Warden.
- DN is also working on the “decolonising the curriculum” campaign with focus turned to areas of best practice.

4.2 Cut the Rent Campaign.

Felix Porter (Housing Officer) updated on the “cut the rent campaign”

- Housing officers have been working on the “Cut the rent” campaign.
- There is a consultation period in regards to the changes in accommodation prices that is going on until April.
- The housing officers feel that the campaign should be a resident led campaign if it is to be successful.

17. Special report (45 mins)

6.1 Investigation report into the resignation of the President and subsequently the resignation of 2 more Sabbatical Officers.

Jennifer Hart (Deputy CEO) gave a presentation into the summary of the report.

The summary presented can be found here

<http://www.goldsmithssu.org/news/article/6013/Investigation-Report-Executive-Summary/>

Key Points were

Background:

A Report was commissioned by the Board of Trustees of Goldsmiths Students’ Union following a formal complaint submitted by a Student Trustee which made a series of complaints about one of the Sabbatical Officers, and proposed that person’s removal from office. The central complaint was that the Sabbatical Officer’s conduct and/or behaviour had led to the resignation of the Union President.

Subsequently the Sabbatical officer also resigned so there was not going to be an opportunity to for removal of said officer but there was a need to ensure this does not happen again. The investigation was carried out by DWF LLP who were one of the recommendations of the National Union of Students

JH (Hart) advised that the role of the trustee board is to ensure the legality and financial viability of a union and to be in charge of the overall running of a charitable organisation which Goldsmiths Students Union is.

It was clarified that any member of the trustee board that was involved in the investigation were part of the decision making panel. The union was asked to respond to the report with an action plan and this was presented by JH (Hart)

Summary of report

It was noted that there was a breakdown of relationship that started off professionally. Most areas of disagreement were areas of legitimate debate that are not unusual in a sabbatical team.

It was however noted that noted that the usual means of dealing with disagreements between officers were not robust enough to support the officers through the particular disagreements they had.

The disagreement went into a negative spiral and this caused considerable emotional turmoil and in a trustee board on 14 October 2015 this prompted the resignation.

Key findings

The formal complaint described the alleged behaviour and conduct as amounting to a form of 'bullying'.

The investigators suggested that for the sake of the investigation, the most appropriate definition for bullying was the ACAS definition in its guide "Bullying and Harrassment at Work".

It was also noted that resignation should not automatically mean that there was wrongdoing. There were a large number of factors that contributed to the President's resignation and not just one.

However it is clear that on occasion an overly assertive tone, stance and language was adopted by the Sabbatical Officer during some meetings and in some emails. We believe

that such statements and behaviours had an adverse impact on the President, and other colleagues within the Union.

It was also noted that there was a lack of clarity as to the procedure for dealing with disagreements between Sabbatical Officers.

Recommendations

There should be a clear framework setting out the working parameters, professional standards and behaviours expected of Sabbatical Officers so that there is a clear understanding of what is required.

A new process should be introduced to enable disagreements/tensions between members of the Sabbatical Team to be swiftly resolved

The Students Union needs to give consideration to what additional pastoral support should be provided to Sabbatical Officers, and indeed other staff.

Full details of report can be found here

<http://www.goldsmithssu.org/news/article/6013/Investigation-Report-Executive-Summary/>

Action Plan key points

- There will be training on the role of a trustee and communication with students as to what a trustee does as well as ongoing support for trustees.
- There will be clarification as part of the handover as to the political remit and the trustee remit.
- There will be guidance provided on how to settle disagreements between Sabbatical Officers
- There will be clarity and improvement of the code of conduct guidance for the officers.
- There will be a review of the student/ staff protocol.
- There will be a definition of what support means for officers.
- There will be a support with action plans to be developed for the officers.

Members were encouraged to contact Jennifer Hart if they wanted to be part of the process that will later consider the actions going forward.

Discussion

The first question was whether the full report would be made available to the students.

It was advised by DN that due to the sensitivity that the full details could not be released as some of the people mentioned in the reports are still working or actively involved with Goldsmiths Students Union.

It was enquired whether there is a rule for decision making in the case of disagreements.

Response: DN advised that there was no rule but proposed there should be

It was enquired whether there are Executive meetings for the Sabbatical officers.

Response: DN advised that there are meetings for the Sabbatical and part-time Officers but have previously not been minuted or circulated.

It was also enquired whether there was a Code of conduct / grievance procedure within the union and Graham Gaskell (CE) confirmed that there is a procedure for this.

Students asked if there is a mechanism of accountability

Response: It was advised that the Students Assembly is the accountability body for political issues but this does not resolve the problem of day to day accountability which was one of the issues highlighted in the Action Points

A member advised that whilst preventative measures have been taken it did not seem that there were any reparative actions for what was done.

DN there are no mechanisms for doing this especially as the members left however he highlighted that counselling was offered to those who were affected by the events from last year.

It was also noted that there was no mention of whether some of the implicated trustee members had seen the report and had a chance to comment on it.

It was recommended by a member that part time officers should be able considered for further consultation of the action plan.

18. Solidarity motions

7.1 Solidarity motion for UCL students campaigning against the rent increases.

In line with the “Cut the rent campaign” The Goldsmiths Students’ Union supports UCL students campaigning against the high fees that are being imposed on students.

Vote for 27

Vote against 0

Abstentions 0

7.2 Solidarity motion with the public bodies who will be affected by the government’s plan to outlaw BDS.

DN: The government is attempting to prevent local authorities from participating in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement against Israel. Under the new guidance, charities and Students’ Unions would not be able to boycott products that are not in line with their values.

The SU stands in solidarity with any unions and public bodies in their wish to enact the Boycotting, Divest and Sanctions in line with their values and political.

Votes for 36

Votes against: 0

Abstentions: 0

19. Any Other Business

8.1 Thursday at PM the Sex Workers Solidarity society is holding an event themed around on family life of sex workers and how to support for them.

8.1 The Housing Officers have a meeting in Room 356 after the meeting to increase the awareness of the “Cut the rent” campaign.

Motions

5.1 Support the Rent Strike

Proposer: Liam Renouf

Secunder: Felix Porter

This Union Notes:

1. In a previous student assembly in November, a motion was passed saying that rent should be capped at no more than half the average maintenance loan.
2. Students across goldsmiths' halls have experienced instances of no heating, no water, and/or inconsistent plumbing for a number of days at a time.
3. In an email to the college registrar and secretary, Cut The Rent campaign demanded the following:
 1. Rent be capped at half the maintenance loan
 2. All accommodation should be safe, secure, and liveable (as defined by shelter)
4. Over 200 students have signed up to withhold their rent for student accommodation next term until demands are met.

This Union Believes:

1. The union has a responsibility to support students in their autonomous choice to voice a political statement or protest, in this case to withhold the rent
2. Students should have adequate living conditions, as defined by Shelter, and affordable rent, that does not cost more than half a student's maintenance loans.
3. Students have the right to organise around housing activism in a way that is inclusive, safe and effective.
4. The university has a responsibility to make sure that our university is accessible and affordable to people of all backgrounds, and that accommodation is a large part of this

This Union Resolves:

1. To officially support students' right to Rent Strike by issuing a statement to that effect
2. To assist with campaign planning support
3. To be available as a facilitator in negotiations between the campaigning group and the university
4. To provide advice and guidance to home and international students on the risks associated with strike action
5. To provide financial support to the campaign (eg materials, printing, etc) up to £500, to be taken from the existing campaigns budget (note: housing has been identified as a priority campaign since the start of this year)

5. 2 Boycott Zabłudowicz

Proposer: Tara Mariwany

Seconder: Alessia Cancemi

Union notes:

1. To boycott is to target products, companies and institutions that profit from or are implicated in, the violation of Palestinian rights; to divest is to target corporations complicit in the violation of Palestinian human rights, as enshrined in the Geneva Convention, and ensure that investments or pension funds are not used to finance such companies; to sanction is to ask the global community to recognise Israel's violations of international law and to act accordingly as they do to other member states of the United Nations.
2. That BDS is an effective tactic, which educates society about accountability to international law, economically pressures companies/institutions to change their practices and politically pressures the global community.
3. That Goldsmiths Students' Union adopted the call by over 170 Palestinian Civil Society organisations, locally and worldwide, to pass the BDS motion at Student Assembly, February 2015.
4. That the Zabłudowicz Collection maintains ties to the Arts and Design departments, e.g. through the post-graduate MFA Curating course, in which "students from the course collaborate on the 'Testing Ground for Art and Education' season of projects, exhibitions and workshops".
5. That the Zabłudowicz Art Trust and Zabłudowicz Art Projects derive their name from Chaim (Poju) Zabłudowicz, the co-founder, with Anita Zabłudowicz, of the Zabłudowicz Collection.
6. That Poju Zabłudowicz is the Chairman and CEO of Tamares, the corporate arm of The Zabłudowicz Trust, which focuses on real estate, technology, and leisure and media.
7. That Tamares is responsible for investments in Knaifaim, an Israeli based company, focused on the aviation industry, with major holdings in several Israel companies including Kanfey Tachzuka, which provides maintenance services to the Israeli Air Force.
8. That Poju Zabłudowicz is the director of the Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre (BICOM), a company dedicated to creating 'a supportive environment for Israel in Britain', to which representatives of the Zabłudowicz Art Trust have donated millions of British pounds to.
9. That the Palestinian Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott issued a call to Boycott the Zabłudowicz Art Trust in October 2015 "until it ends its complicity in violations of human rights and international law".

Union believes:

1. That BDS, as passed by the student body, should be reinforced and pushed for on all fronts, in order to support the Palestinian people's human rights and uphold international law.
2. That the Zabludowicz Art Trust, and by extension, the Zabludowicz Collection, is complicit in the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and Israeli Apartheid, by financially associating itself with companies active in Israel, and by providing maintenance and services to the Israeli Air force.
3. That Unions have a moral responsibility to heed the call of oppressed peoples.

Union resolves:

1. To pressure Goldsmiths University to heed the call of BDS, and to end their complicity in the crimes committed by the Israeli state against the Palestinian people.
2. To call all students and staff, especially of the Design and Art departments, to denounce the cooperation between the University and Zabludowicz until the Zabludowicz Art Trust ends its investments in and ties with all Israeli companies that are complicit in war crimes perpetuated by the Israeli state, and to end its ties with Israel lobby groups that enable the Israel's regime of oppression.
3. To issue a call on the Zabludowicz Art Trust to end its complicity in violations of human rights and international law.

5.3 Motion to for the SU to adopt the Right2Debate policy procedure

Proposer: Asher Fainman

Secunder: Shazeah Elahee

Introduction: The Right2Debate policy motion seeks to provide a set of principles regarding handling external speakers that the SU must adopt. It also seeks to present a clear procedure through which students or the SU can voice strong objections to a divisive speaker whilst maintaining the right to freedom of speech on campus.

This union notes:

That students have concerns about potentially contentious or divisive speakers coming onto campus. This has in some cases at Goldsmiths and other universities lead to a speaker either being banned or excessively disruptive protests in order to censor occurring at the event. Two notable recent examples, from many, being at the Maryam Namazie event here or with Macer Gifford at UCL. The university and by extension the SU, are mandated under the education reform act 1988 to defend freedom of speech which also involves defending the right to self-organise. However, it is also recognized that the SU is a democratic body as defined in its memorandum and seeks to ensure the safety and inclusion of all students and that marginalization and discrimination are not acceptable.

This union believes:

That the SU should act as a mediator to engender dialogue between strongly opposing viewpoints to ensure respect and cohesion between all students as opposed to censorship or polarity. Therefore we suggest that the following principles and specific procedures taken from the Right2Debate campaign policy model as outlined below should be adopted by the SU as best practice, to act as a mediating tool in situations where there are disagreements about a speakers presence on campus.

This motion proposes that four fundamental points are upheld by the SU:

- Debate over censorship – The SU must ensure that platforms are contested by other speakers rather than no-platforming speakers when they are seen as potentially being in violation of SU safe-space or external speaker policies. However, Student Unions do indeed have the right to ban a speaker but only under the condition that said speaker is in breach of the law regarding the incitement of hatred and/or violence.
- Debate over uncontested platforms for contentious speakers – this is achieved by ensuring another speaker is able to effectively challenge the divisive narratives of another, or a minimum of 30 minutes is delegated to Q&A with a sizeable portion of that time being delegated to students who want to contest these divisive views to ensure effective debate.
- Clarity – this is ensured by the SUs uploading their justification publically online if they deem a speaker to be contentious and, therefore, such a speaker requires a contested platform through the medium of debate – or if in certain circumstances they outright ban the speaker. This is vital for transparency and scrutiny.

- Uniformity - this is achieved through a petition structure for complaints and an independent moderator during the event. This also includes ensuring that the event is safeguarded against any serious disruption - either from the inside or out.

Outlined below are two procedural scenarios to handle disagreements about speakers:

Procedure 1

The SU already has a responsibility to mitigate against any risk regarding external speakers – if SU deems an event to be of high risk because of a contentious speaker this policy calls for the SU to ensure that effective challenge can take place (and not see the event banned, for example). The SU must publish publically online reasons with citable evidence why they deem a speaker contentious. This challenge can take place by: 1.) SU either facilitating a contesting speaker, 2.) SU delegating a minimum of three questions to students who may feel marginalized (can be done anonymously at their request), or 3.) questions chosen by the independent moderator at the event – the preference of the option chosen will be of the host society of the event and must be published online.

PROCEDURE 2

If the SU does not think an event should be deemed high risk, and therefore doesn't flag an event, but a number of students feel that this should be the case, students can go through the Right2Debate petition system. The SU, if they receive a petition signed by at least 5 people stating objections to a speaker and citable evidence, must then seriously consider this complaint, and must publish the decision to contest a speaker (not the petition) online, with justified reasons for their action. If the petition is rejected this decision must also be published online.

If the decision is reconsidered and accepted by the SU, then the contesting students (namely those who signed the petition) can either choose between 1.) inviting a speaker, 2.) having time delegated to them during Q&A, or 3.) submitting anonymous questions to the independent moderator to ask. The preferred option in this case is to the contesting students and must be published online.

Notes: 'Facilitate' is defined as organizing the travel for an invited speaker, and being responsible for costs of any additional security needed for a speaker in Procedural Scenario 2. Students must also comply with the external speaker policy form's timeframe in completing this task. While the authors recognize that imposing financial burden on students is difficult, we recommend that if a society feels unable to use its own funds, that contacting special interest groups, crowd-funding, fundraising, and asking the SU for help in finding ways to raise these funds are all viable options to be encouraged and considered.

The independent moderator (defined as someone chairing the event who was not involved in organization of the event) is only present at events deemed 'high risk' by the SU or in cases where the R2D petition is accepted.

This union resolves:

That the above stated procedures are to be incorporated into existing SU external speaker and events policy during the review over the summer and made available publically for students to follow next academic year.

The GSU Annual Accounts 2015

The accounts follow a format which complies with the requirements of the Charity Commission
The report shows what we generated and what we spent between 1 August 2014 and 31st July 2015
Independently verified > our auditors are Crowe Clark Whitehill (also do many other charities)
Also shows the Balance Sheet
Snapshot > this shows what GSU had in bank, monies owed etc on 31 July 2015

Overview

Turnover of £1,901,993
Surplus for the year of £54,099
We are a charity therefore not-for-profit, but surpluses are important
Continued falling turnover in the bar this is a national trend
Surpluses are so we can build reserves and enable capital expenditure (eg speakers in Stretch £40k)
Overall, GSU is in a relatively healthy financial position.
Net current assets of £369,281 on 31/7/15

Who sets budgets & how we review them

Income sources
Grant (and new SLSP grant), gym, nursery, bar, shop, ents, Café Natura rent, Freshers Fayre etc
Expenditure
Staffing (including @£100k on student salaries), commercial running costs, activities.
Non pay > training, NUS affiliation, security, activities, student media etc

Context and Comparison

How much do we actually spend?
Overall subsidy Representation £441k, Activities £164k, Venue & Entertainments £59k
£30k income from the gym (10% membership fees)
The College
Income and expenditure, plan re surpluses
Elsewhere

Challenges and Transparency

Increasing costs and possible decreasing sources of income
Uncertainty regarding College grant, increased employers costs due to pension changes and London Living Wage, need to invest in increased support for advice and activities and central support (finance)

GSU finance and transparency

We are always delighted to go into the detailed income and expenditure, we believe we are both efficient, effective and provide great value for money! Happy to have detailed discussion outside Assembly. GSU is a membership organization and elected students form the majority of Trustee Board

Accounts go to the Charity Commission so you can compare us to other SU's and charities
We will have a deficit this year and future surpluses likely to be smaller, so the reserves are important!

8.1 Proposal to Move to By-Election in October 2016

Context

There were several positions unfilled after the Spring elections that took place in March 2016. Traditionally the practice has been to fill these positions through Student Assembly. It is now proposed that we hold a bye-election in October 2016 to fill vacant positions.

Advantages

There is currently no opportunity for students in their first year at Goldsmiths College to run for positions. This applies both to masters and first year students.

It would also make it more democratic as all students would all have the opportunity to vote for the officers.

It would give more legitimacy to the election process as candidates would know that they have to go through an election and to engage all students in order to gain a position.

It would still allow the union a secondary opportunity to run in the elections but without excluding the larger student body.

It would engage PG students who are studying only for a year and may want to be representatives.

Disadvantage

This would have to have a quick turn around so students would not get as long to decide so nominations would have to open early.

New elected officers would not be able to be part of the training that goes on before the term starts. Some positions such as Smiths Editor and Leopard Editor need these positions filled prior to the academic year starting in order to recruit at induction events