

Goldsmiths SU Student Assembly 25th February 2016
5.30pm, Main Hall

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 Coordinator)

0. Safe Space policy: The chair read out the safe space policy.
1. 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.*
2. Apologies (1min)
1.2 No apologies had been sent
3. 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.
4. Motions (15 mins)
.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

- 29 voted for the motion
- 0 voted against
- 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."

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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

8. 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.