

Minutes

General Meeting

13th April 2023

There will be a meeting of the **Students' Union General Meeting** on **Thursday 12th of April 2023** from 5pm within **LTA4** and via **Microsoft Teams**.

In order to ensure the meeting is kept to time please ensure all attached papers are read in advance.

IN ATTENDANCE

1.1	Members Present		
	Tash Miller	TM	Union President
	Jess Reid	JR	Vice President Communities
	Zoe Crosher	ZC	Health & Wellbeing Officer
	Petra Jarosova	PJ	Equalities Officer (Women)
	Adhiraj Singh	AS	International Officer
	Nicola Foley	NF	Equalities Officer (Disabled)
1.2	In Attendance		
	Megsavanh Warren	MW	Faculty Officer
	Fiona Kerr	FK	Faculty Officer
	Barbora Svobodova	BS	Faculty Officer
	Liam Wray	LW	Faculty Officer
	Mairi Calderwood	MC	Faculty Officer
	Gellert Turkevi-Nagy	GTN	Faculty Officer
	Ali Muqtadir	AM	Faculty Officer
	Thelma Adaeze Munonye	TAM	Faculty Officer
	Gaja Zivec	GZ	Faculty Officer
	Aidan Wallace	AW	Faculty Officer
	Sara Brandt	SB	Faculty Officer
	Rohit Gangwani	RG	Faculty Officer
	Alex Graham	AG	Faculty Officer
	60 Ordinary Student Members	OM	
1.3	Observers & Staff Support		
	Natalie Hay	NH	Democracy and Representation Coordinator
	Al Lawley-Powell	ALP	Chief Executive
1.4	Apologies		
	Murray Bushell	MB	Sports President
1.5	Absent without Apologies		

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 Minutes ratified by TM. No objections.

CHALLENGES TO ORDER PAPER

- 3.1 No challenges to order.

DATES TO NOTE

- 4.1 Society Academy – End of April
 4.2 Sports Academy – 19th April
 4.3 RATE Awards – 22nd May
 4.4 Learning and Teaching Festival and Conference – w/c 22nd May

ELECTIONS & RESIGNATIONS

- 5.1 Spring Elections – [Results](#)

REPORTS

- 6.1 Union President
TM As we have the AGM straight after this meeting, we'll be keeping these reports super quick.

I was quite involved in the Elections, and the last couple of months have been quite busy. We've been handling a lot of student queries, finishing off a few projects and working quite a bit on the Cost-of-Living campaign as well.

Annual Report was provided at the AGM immediately following the GM.

- 6.1.1 Plant-Based Commitment Update

TM In the transition to moving to a plant-based menu, customer feedback has been sought through our outlets as we have been asking students to see what items they would like to see on the menu.

The Union has also been working with current suppliers and their development chefs to come up with ideas that meet the mandate but at the same time maintain cost effective food options for students on campus.

The Union also plans to contact other Students' Unions as well as catering experts as advised by the motion proposer to help shape its menu offer.

While the Union is taking on new suppliers to enable us to get quality products at the best price, as with high street shoppers, we have seen rises in costs ranging from 12% to a staggering 224% increase on some produce lines.

While vegetables seem to be getting hit the hardest with the rises we hope the market stabilises ahead of semester one, 2023/2024 in order that cost effective menu options can be provided.

Traditionally, the summer offers members of the National Union of Students purchasing consortium to meet with new suppliers each pitching their new menu options. Stirling Students' Union will be present and working with others to introduce a 50% plant-based offer.

- 6.2 Sports President

Apologies received. Annual Report was provided at the AGM on MB's behalf immediately following the GM.

- 6.3 VP Communities

JR I'm going to keep it super quick as well. I've been working quite hard on the community fridge and pantry, so continuing to expand that and continuing to gather student feedback. We've had some really useful student feedback in the last few weeks, which is really good and it kind of bodes well for next year and how that program is going to work.

We've had Pride Week, Green Week and Wellbeing Week, all of which I've contributed to along with our amazing Societies who have also contributed. Special thanks to the LGBTQ Society for running an excellent all-in-person group Pride Week for the first time since COVID.

Undertook rent reviews and subsequently rejected the proposals of the rents offered by the University.



The last thing was a very successful last Communities Zone, where I answered 45 minutes worth of questions on the Catholic Society suspension. It was really good because those questions were excellent and really kept the whole process transparent and the investigation open to students.

Annual Report was provided at the AGM immediately following the GM.

UPDATES, DISCUSSION AND DECISION TOPICS

7.1 Society Regulations Motion

- JR It has come to my attention throughout numerous points this year that our Clubs and Socs Schedule were not fit for practice. For example, Societies not being able to purchase objects in the summer because they didn't have 10 members because the year hadn't started; there was very little in the Societies Schedule around holding the Vice President Communities to account, along with not actually having a section on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. So amongst these changes in these updates, there are a few other things, however, it's basically ensuring that our Society Schedule is fit for practice, supportive of societies, and ensures that there are no bureaucratic or administration errors or difficulties throughout the year and makes things as smooth as possible.
- OM So I believe in the motion, if I'm not mistaken, there's a clause to have committee elections. So for people running for committee elections, they have to either have been to, I believe, three meetings or have been a member for a semester. Have we encountered issues with people who are not qualified to be on committee positions within Societies that would justify adding another bureaucratic layer to the process of electing new committee members?
- JR The simple reason that was added is to avoid the situation where people have their friends joining the Society to then just run for the committee. We want to ensure that people who are becoming committee are actually dedicated members of Societies and our dedicated members who are going to the Society. I've seen this year a few times where people have bought memberships, then just run for committees. It's come up in meetings that I've been to, people have said "You've never been to a meeting here. Why should we vote for you?". That's not really how committees should be elected, it should be elected on the basis of what you have done for the Societies and your passion for it.
- OM Would that also count if at the end of the year, you don't have all the positions filled? Then in the next semester, if you still have them open, would you be allowed to have new members run for the positions?
- JR Yes. So the caveat on that section is if all three core committee positions haven't been filled then someone who hasn't either attended three meetings or had a membership for a semester, would then be able to run for those roles. New members can also run for committee positions. So if those core positions haven't been filled or if there haven't been three meetings. For example, say you're a new Society that's been approved in September, as what happened with our Wildlife Conservation Society. If they wanted to officially elect their new committee on their second meeting, you're of course going to be able to run because there have only been two meetings.
- OM Say a new Society forms, and they need the initial committee. What if they want to have five positions, would that not come up with the situation where you need to wait for a whole semester until you have more than three committee positions?
- JR No, say a new Society comes up with five positions in their starter pack, if there haven't been three meetings or if Societies haven't been around, then of course people can still run for election. It's really to ensure that established Societies don't just have people joining for the sake of joining committees because we have seen that happen. While we understand being on a committee is important for people's CVs or an important opportunity, we want our Societies to be run by committees that really do care for the Society.

No speeches in favour of the motion.

No speeches against the motion.

JR Like I said, this is to make Societies run as easily and efficiently as possible. It's also making sure that we're bringing our Societies up to best practice. I'm particularly passionate about the inclusion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into this Schedule. In my opinion, it should have always been part of it, but it's great to have added that and I think that would be really good to have. It will make it really clear that when those ED&I issues arise in Societies, that they're held accountable.

MOTION PASSED (83.1% IN FAVOUR)

7.2 Amazon Purchase Policy Motion

JR Yes, so I proposed the Amazon Purchase Policy Motion because it was something that the Sabbs had wanted to pass last year. However, due to the last General Meeting not being quorate, they couldn't. It's important to me that as a Union, we uphold our values, including that of sustainability and environmentalism. Amazon frankly, does not support that, and in particular, their treatment of their workers is horrendous. I've provided a lot of evidence in the motion to show this. It's important that we are upholding our values of unionisation and sustainability.

OM Does this only involve the Union or will Societies have to, or are they encouraged to?

JR So it's specified in the motion itself, but essentially it does include Societies as it's all Union purchases. However, with the caveat only where it is feasible and financially suitable. So for example, say AirTV wants to buy a new mic and the mic is £200 on Amazon, but anywhere else it's £1100. Then in that case we want Societies to function as best as they can with the equipment they need, that's the situation where they are allowed to make that purchase. But for general purchases, no, we'd be encouraging Societies to purchase elsewhere.

OM If there's a time urgency, the times on Prime Delivery are like one or two days, so let's say a Society needs something quickly. Is that also a justifiable reason to use Amazon?

JR The wording of the motion is when it is suitable and when it's feasible. So of course, that's where a purchase would be allowed. In general, we always encourage Societies to be as organised as possible but we know things happen.

OM How do you regulate that? Would they have to write up a report every time they do Amazon purchases to show that've tried to find something else?

JR This would be regulated by the Union when putting through all the purchase orders, and basically in the communications that would be a case of ensuring that they considered other options and that there weren't any other suitable opens. In terms of this within the Union, we would regulate that with the Sabbatical Officers holding our Union accountable for it.

OM Are you saying there is a risk of Societies having their request denied?

JR Not at all. If we find an alternative that is financially feasible and in terms of the time scales feasible, then, of course, we're going to propose to Societies use this. Which majority of people in committees are very reasonable, and especially when it comes to running Societies ethically and sustainably, they would aim to do that. But for example, if you are a small Society who have only £100 in your bank, we're not going turn around and deny you being able to buy from Amazon just out of the fact that it's more ethical. We will ensure that you can run as you want and with the stuff that you want to do.

No speeches in favour of the motion.

No speeches against the motion.

JR It's important our Union upholds our values, which include that of unionisation, supporting workers and supporting our planet and the people. So for me, this is just simply continuing these values.

MOTION PASSED (82.1% IN FAVOUR)

Trigger Warning: Please note this motion discussion included sensitive topics for some and discusses gender-based violence and sexual assault.

7.3 EmilyTest Motion

- OM The EmilyTest is a gender-based violence charter for Scottish Universities to join, it's a great thing. It takes whole systems approach to gender-based violence from prevention to the disciplinary process to support. It actively engages with students. It does focus groups, it does research, but most importantly it supports Universities, and it holds them to account as it's a third party. It's received Scottish Government support from Nicola Sturgeon and Shirley-Anne Somerville, who is the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.
As you can see in the motion outline, it's wanted by students. We've done a survey which showed around, I think, it was 88% of people interviewed were in favour. I believe that it's necessary, particularly for Stirling, because from 2016 to 2020, only a third of the gender-based violence cases reported were upheld. So I think it's a very important step.
- OM Reading into the motion, how can this motion propose additional £10,000 costs given the Union deficit last year?
- OM I'm not really sure where the £10,000 is coming from, as outlined in the motion it's an initial £2000 pounds starting cost. It's then approximately, I believe, £6000 across the whole term of a six-year period. So if you look at what I've outlined in the motion notes, the financial implications of it is a one-off initial cost of £2000. Then a £7500 one-off assessment fee and then after that it is £2000 are required. So, if you take that on an average of six years, which is what they're proposing the whole package takes, it costs £3000 a year. It's less per year than the Athena Swan charter, which the University is currently signed on to. It's also just been signed on to from a number of Universities, similar to Stirling size like Dundee, and the price per year was established in conjunction with higher education institutions and with the Scottish Government to ensure that it is feasible.
Cost is very important, and the cost is very important to Universities. However, you've got to think about the cost to people's lives or people's livelihoods and their experience of gender violence. This is not a motion that is cheap, but it's not a motion that is unimportant. This is something really important to spend money on.
- TM I would like to clarify that it wouldn't be the Union absorbing that cost. This is a motion in support of the EmilyTest which the University would sign on to.
- OM My understanding of the EmilyTest campaign is it was founded around a woman who died. As someone who believes in women's autonomy, I have a few issues with that. There are plenty of organisations led by survivors, who are still with us, campaigning around gender-based violence. It just feels slightly icky to me that we're removing a women's autonomy in death by using her in this way. How do you propose we stop that?
- OM I do understand where you're coming from, but I'd also like to highlight that this was a movement created by her mother and who knows her child. I don't believe that this is something she would do without her feeling her daughter would be ok with this. It's tricky to not get emotional about it, but I also think that this is wider than just an individual case. It's being used as a platform to make genuine change on gender violence across Universities in Scotland.
- OM Since 2020, there's been 10 cases of gender-based violence at the University of Stirling and the motion states that this illustrates a culture of gender-based violence. How can you say that there's a culture of gender-based violence when there's only been less than 0.2% according to this report?
- OM I think the culture is broader than just that statistic. I think the fact that in a very short period of time, there were that many reported. I did this data survey last year and it shows that it is there, it is present. You've got to remember that this is just ten reported. This is not indicative of the wider scale problem.
What actually evidence is the culture and I should have made this clearer in my motion, is the survey that we conducted on experience. As found in the survey in the appendix, Students were not satisfied with the response and a lot of people

- had experienced, pardon me if it's triggering, sexual assault and gender violence and had not reported and that speaks, I think more to the culture that's present.
- OM Do you think this motion is the most effective way of tackling this issue with the amount of funds or do you think there might be better ways?
- OM I have done a lot of research on this. I've probably spent too much time on this because it comes from quite a personal space. I've been looking at this for now at least two years and I do believe, and I genuinely mean this, that this is the best way forward. There's not another charter like this, there's not something else that produces it. It's been piloted at four different Universities with good results. And it provides a genuine package of support and accountability for people who commit acts of violence. I think it's the best thing out there at present.
- OM I would like to speak in favour. I think this is a great, great motion. I think it's fantastic to see, like, concrete steps being taken, being put in place to further this, especially given that this is a Charter that has things in common externally to set it up in Stirling. So we're not having to build it up from the ground. I know we talk about money here, but the financial strain of setting something up from the ground is actually something that people just don't consider. So the fact we have people coming in to help us and then we are able to maintain that status will just be the betterment for every student at Stirling.

No speeches against the motion.

- OM I think this is a great opportunity for Stirling to be at the forefront of the best practice available and to help prevent and support survivors of gender-based violence. So I would just from the bottom of my heart, I really encourage you guys to vote for this. I think it's the way to create change.

MOTION PASSED (91.9% IN FAVOUR)

7.4 Gender Neutral Facilities Support Motion

- OM I'm here to propose a motion on behalf of the Stirling Trans Collective, and basically, it's to ask for the support of the Students' Union for our campaign for more gender-neutral facilities on campus. At the moment there are no gender-neutral toilets in the teaching room buildings and there are no gender-neutral showers or changing rooms in the gym. That's a problem for trans and non-binary people who don't visually fit into the binary, meaning men and women, or who feel uncomfortable using those gendered facilities. We've tried to get in touch with the University, and from another source, I have heard they have talked about the issue but they thought it was too expensive, which is really funny considering that they just built a whole new reception for aesthetic reasons. We're asking the Students' Union to support our campaign.

No clarifying questions.

- OM The Students' Union is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We should support anything that supports trans, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people at the moment because we are facing an incredibly hostile press, government, everything else and it's really difficult. Like, where am I going to go for a pee on campus sometimes, you know. Anything that relieves that, no one should have to worry about that when they're just here to learn. And I think this is a very important motion to keep moving forward with the Union's commitment to equality.

No speeches against the motion.

- OM Basically what I just said and in addition to that, the University does have a policy that says they will provide adequate facilities to trans people. They're clearly not doing that and they should be held accountable.

MOTION PASSED (94% IN FAVOUR)

- 7.5 Trade Union Congress Motion
- OM Comrades, there has been a notable drop since the end of World War Two, and the growth of the wage given to British workers and the real-term growth that happened before the war. This is ended in an intolerable gap between the costs required to live and the wages that's been being paid to the British worker. The Trade Union Congress, that is the representative body for all the trade unions in the United Kingdom, has set a target of £15 an hour per 2030 in order to catch back up with this drop off in real-term wage growth. This motion commits the Union towards bringing this £15 per hour minimum wage in reality by 2030 and doing it as quickly as it can as part of the Union movement. This Union should support trade unions at every step.
- OM Is this for people who work only in the Union or is it on campus for everything? Are you pushing for this for the Union or for the University?
- OM The motion itself defines the Union alone, however, its intent is to ensure support overall that the University might come to a point where it also supports the Trade Union Congress commitment.
- OM If the Union's finances are not too great, where do you plan on cutting costs in order to be able to afford to pay people higher wages?
- OM That's predominantly purview of the commercial side of the Union in order to find a way to implement the policy of this side, the finance and resources sub-committee also exists for the finances of the Union. This motion, however, has a lot of riders only providing a hard commitment for the Union to come to this point in 2030 where inflation shouldn't have such an effect on the pound that you shouldn't be having to make too many cuts. However, it has stated it exactly as soon as practicable in order to ensure the Union finances are not negatively affected by this motion.
- OM If we were to actually call ourselves a Students' Union and mean it, we shouldn't be in a case where our bar staff, our Union staff, are having to struggle to survive because their wages are too low. We were recently in a situation where the Union was advertising using unpaid trial shifts of up to 18 hours. It was like a collection of trial shifts. This is unacceptable. This motion goes some of the way into rectifying this situation and making sure that the Union is actually a fair and just employer.

No speeches against the motion.

- OM This motion should provide the benefits to the lives of our members who are employed by our commercial side of our Union and ensure our best compliance with the ideals of unionism in a time where our Unions own food bank is struggling to keep itself stocked.

MOTION PASSED (87.9% IN FAVOUR)

- 7.6 Support of Actions for Better Housing
- OM I feel that it's pretty indisputable that we're living in a housing crisis with 12% of Scottish students experiencing homelessness, up to 18% for international students. Research that the Union did found that the majority of students are living with £50 or less after bills and the cost of rent. So this motion essentially seeks to mandate public support from the Students' Union for actions taken by students which build collective power to prevent the University from doing things such as increasing rents. When our Sabbatical Officers go into negotiations with the University, it helps when the student body is building that power on the ground. It assists them kind of with those conversations, but often Universities unjustly punished students who take these actions. So having official support from our Students' Union will provide greater protection from this. Housing affects all of us, and rent increases affect all of us and our Students' Union is here to represent all of us.

No clarifying questions.

- OM Whenever you run a campaign or you try and fight for something better, you need two things. You need inner pressure and outer pressure. The Students' Union can't go into these meetings with just themselves, without proving to the University that there is that outer pressure and that the students are supporting the Students' Union. The students can't do what they do if the Students' Union doesn't support them. So this motion basically ensures that when the Students' Union goes into these meetings, they have the support of the students and the students have the support of the Students' Union and that's why you should vote for this.

No speeches against the motion.

- OM Essentially, obviously we can't study very well if we're struggling to find a place to live or we can't afford our rent. And yeah, housing is just incredibly important and having that support from our Students' Union, it's incredibly important.

MOTION PASSED (98.7% IN FAVOUR)

7.7 Hedgehog Conservation Motion

- OM I'm from the Hedgehog Friendly Campus team at the University and the team helps conserve hedgehogs on this University campus and surrounding communities by doing surveys, building hedgehog houses, doing fundraising and campaigning and other activities. We have to do this because hedgehogs are currently vulnerable to extinction in the UK, so we're trying to help them as best as we can. So what we would like with this motion is for the Union to have one action per year for Hedgehog Conservation. This could be anything from a public post, from speeches, from fundraising or anything that would support hedgehog conservation.

No clarifying questions.

- OM I just want to support this motion, especially because most of us who have been working on Hedgehog Conservation Campus will be going to 4th year or leaving the University and it's kind of like to keep the effort ongoing without our team specifically existing.

No speeches against the motion.

- OM So on top of what I already said, most of Hedgehog Conservation actions support biodiversity on a wider scale, so this would not only be good for hedgehogs, but for all the other animals on campus.

MOTION PASSED (96% IN FAVOUR)

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 OM Will the chair comment on the change and the motion which was revoked in the agenda?
TM There's a deadline to submit motions, however, anyone is able to revoke their motion at any time.
- 8.2 JR Very quickly, this is a request from a student. I work with Societies consistently and occasionally we have Societies that go dormant. Usually, it's due to the committee coming to 4th year, or their master's students and they're leaving. Then people come up and are interested in restarting those societies. This has happened with our Disabled Students' Association. We have had a student come up who is really keen to reinvigorate that Society. It has been dormant since about December this year and they have asked me to see if there's anyone who would be interested in joining their committee or being part of reforming that Society essentially. The student who's doing it is really engaged, really keen. I think it's a Society that contributes massively to our student culture and we need to consistently be ensuring we're there for students with disabilities and we're

supporting that community. So if anyone's interested, feel free to come up at the end. The other thing is if there's anyone that's interested in a Society that has gone dormant, and you want to restart it, please do come forward anyway. But in particular, DSAS because it's a fantastic Society. You can contact me at communities.union@stir.ac.uk as well.



DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 9.1 Next Academic Year – 2023/24
- 9.2 AGM will proceed immediately following the General Meeting.