

Minutes

Annual General Meeting

13th April 2023

There will be a meeting of the **Students' Union Annual General Meeting** on **Thursday 13th of April 2023** immediately following the General Meeting 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 |
| | 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 |
| | Mairi Calderwood | MC | Faculty Officer |
| | Gellert Turkevi-Nagy | GTN | Faculty Officer |
| | Ali Muqtadir | AM | Faculty Officer |
| | Gaja Zivec | GZ | Faculty Officer |
| | Aidan Wallace | AW | Faculty Officer |
| | Alex Graham | AG | Faculty Officer |
| | 35 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 | | |

REPORTS

- 2.1 Annual Report 2022/23

The full presentation provided is available [here](#).

- 2.1.1 Union President

TM We've had a fantastic year. It's been a busy one, hectic one, exciting one and one chock-a-block full of wins. This year I've had the pleasure of being not only a Union President, but on many occasions your Vice President Education. Despite being a team member down, I think we've had one of our most successful years in the Union and it has been an absolute privilege to be a part of it.

We started the year off celebrating 3 cohorts of students in the 10 graduation ceremonies during June, we saw over 4000 students and their families celebrate the achievement of their degrees and we welcomed back students from 2020 and 2021 to finally cross the stage.

We followed this up by each attending Scotland and National Conferences. I attended the National Union of Students Charities 'Lead and Change Conference' in Leeds, followed by sparqs 'That's Quality Conference' in Dundee as VP Education. Both of which were great opportunities to network with and meet other Sabbs from across the country.

Into the beginning of the first semester, I led a national campaign that involved emailing MPs and MSPs regarding the cost-of-living crisis. Our MP for Stirling, Alan Smith, made a visit to the Union where we discussed how his office would be supporting students through the crisis. Following this, we won funding from the Stirling Fund to support students which has been used to open the Community Food Initiative, which includes the fridge and pantry, free breakfasts and the recently opened heat and eat station which you can find downstairs in Starbucks.

In addition to this work, I was invited to take part in the Scottish Government Student Poverty and Mental Health Roundtable hosted by NUS Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government in Glasgow in October, where the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, inadequate student housing and insufficient student finance were discussed. From this roundtable where we shared real examples of real students who are being impacted by low maintenance funding and the cost-of-living crisis, NUS Scotland was able to secure an additional £900 in SAAS loans for students next year.

VP Communities and I attended the Scottish Trade Union Congress Rally in September, as well as the National Union of Students Cost-of-Living Rally in February, marching for better conditions with allies from across the country. We joined picket lines for our own UCU branch here in Stirling, joining in the call that our lecturers' working conditions are our learning conditions.

In January, I was invited on behalf of Advanced Higher Education, to present at the Top Management Programme to Vice Chancellors and senior managers of Universities and Colleges from the UK and around the world. We spoke about the importance of engaging with Student Unions and the expertise in studentship that we can bring to the table.

In February, we held our Annual Spring Elections, one of our most successful in recent years. We saw a fantastic turnout in both candidates and voters and the atmosphere during the voting period was incredible. Your next Sabbatical Officer and Volunteer Officer team is strong and I have every confidence that they will continue the great work of this Students' Union.

In March, we attended the National and Scottish National Union of Students Conferences, where we discussed and voted on some fantastic policies. We saw VP Communities Sex Workers Support Motion passed as NUS Scotland policy, and at the same conference, we were shortlisted for Students Association of the Year. We didn't win, but we should have won.

Just afterwards, I hosted our University Chancellor and former First Minister of Scotland, Lord Jack McConnell, for a Q&A event with students which addressed his comments in December on the Gender Recognition Reform Act. The students who asked questions both in advance and on the night are an absolute credit to this University, with their thought-provoking and challenging yet respectful discussion, being the highlight of my evening.

Right now, I am finishing up on the Personal Tutor Review, which has been a long time in the works but it will continue to an overarching redesign of the program. I'm looking forward to seeing how the extensive student feedback this project has collected will be used to benefit students in the coming years.

In our final few weeks, VP Communities and I will be exploring some more long-term funding opportunities, in particular for the Community Food Initiative, so that students are supported ongoingly and not just in a crisis. We will also be working with the new team to ensure a smooth handover and to support them as they take on their new and exciting roles.

2.1.2 Vice President Communities

JR Over the last year, I've focused on, in my role as Vice President Communities, the continued reinvigoration of Communities Zone post-COVID and especially during the cost-of-living crisis, now more than ever, our students need their community, and we need to band together.

In terms of my manifesto commitment, 67% of the promises I made to students during the last year's election have been completed, 27% are ongoing projects or initiatives and 6%, one manifesto point, I chose to put to the side. I chose to put the point, engage more with First Bus, ScotRail and the University to tackle delays and improve services because our Union President kindly took that on this year due to her keen interest in that area.

In terms of Societies, I'm delighted that we've finished the year with 78 Societies with the Communities Zone Executive Committee having welcomed 10 new Societies this year and 5 Dormant Societies have become reactive again. As of writing this report, we have 1499 student members, a 9% increase in Members from last year having had one larger Society move to Sports Zone.

Our Societies have had a fantastic year. I can't go on about how excited I am for every single Society. We've had Societies going on international trips, doing so many collaborations, social events, conferences, and competitions. Our Societies have really banded together this year and done so many fantastic things. It's been great to just support them and be able to encourage them wherever I could throughout the year.

In terms of the cost-of-living crisis, over the last year, I've worked with Union President on our community fridge and pantry having opened. That has given food out to over 200 students so far, and we hope that this will continually expand year-on-year. In semester two, we launched our free breakfasts scheme and have provided over 1400 free breakfasts to students. We began piloting our first heat and eat station, and we hope that our Sabbatical Officer team next year can continue to expand that, particularly VP Communities-elect as I know that's a keen interest of hers.

In terms of housing, in the first semester of last year, I began connecting the Student Union with the local Stirling Council, having meetings with Councillor Gibson, Councillor McGarvey and Councillor Preston. From having connected us with the Stirling Council, we've agreed we're going to meet semesterly between the Union, the University and the Council to ensure that collaboration and to actually hold the University accountable and its promises to students because it's great to have that local government level on our side as students.

I've worked on the Housing Guide throughout the year and we did our first Housing Fayre, which was an awesome opportunity to get students

feedback on housing. We had over 200 students come up to the stall that day and we got over 130 students completing our survey. These results will then be used in our Housing Committee report, which is going to be developed over the summer. I've had a few interim meetings with them earlier in the semester and following the elections at the last Communities Zone, they've had their first meeting and I'm very confident that they will be challenging the University as we go forward. It's great to have such a good committee that will be chaired by next year's Housing Officer.

In terms of inclusion, culture and international activities, we have greeted many new cultural-based Societies this year. We held our first International Day of Culture since COVID and for the first time our International Officer, with my encouragement, along with University colleagues, has sat on the Student Experience Committee along with other committees to contribute to the actions around inclusion and diversity on our campus.

In terms of campaigns. I won't go into too much detail about it, but I've obviously delighted to say that NUS Scotland has passed the motion I put forward around supporting student sex workers. It's an area of particular passion of mine and I'm delighted to say that that will be a campaigning priority next year. I've also sat on the NUS Scotland Working Group around an independent NUS Scotland, which has been a fantastic experience.

In terms of mental health and well-being, our sensory room opened last semester. There's been fantastic feedback on that and we're now working to expand that, also just ensure that's open 24/7 because that's had a great impact on our students who use the sensory room.

We also launched our Tackling Student Loneliness campaign last semester, which offered free activities, opportunities for students to get involved in their community. And finally, having passed the motion to provide free drug testing kits last semester, we are now providing free drug testing kits as a Union and we are actively supporting our Help Not Harm approach to drug use on campus. Over 250 drug tests have been provided by the Students' Union. I hope that in the next year, we can continue with that and see where we can develop the campaign next and develop this with our students in mind. It's been fantastic being your Vice President Communities this year, I feel really proud of all the work that's been done and I know for a fact you're in great hands when VP Community-elect joins the Sabbatical Officer team next year.

2.1.3 Sports Union President (*read on MB's behalf*)

JR Sports Union membership has remained over 2,100 members this year. A slight increase to last year's membership. Membership numbers have been helped by the introduction of two new clubs, Pole Fitness and Orienteering.

This year also saw the second edition of our Varsity vs St Andrews. Again, a resounding success with fixtures taking place both here in Stirling and away in St Andrews. There were 20 fixtures on the day and over 250 students took part from Stirling. The only down point on the day, St Andrews were your victors.

We also saw Sport For All run again this year with the aim to promote accessibility within our clubs. Four sessions took place throughout the week and all sessions received good participation. A new campaign this year was the Full Time on Initiations campaign, looking to put an end to

initiations within clubs. Over 50 clubs posted with 1,475 liking these posts.



A lot of student-led campaigns did amazing this year as well. Movember was led by our ambassadors, Robbie Wales and Rob Matthews. Both did an amazing job with initiatives such as 5p donations on hot drinks, an Inside Out Day and a 24-hour run. James Falls, our Oddballs Ambassador spoke to over 350 students to raise awareness of Testicular Cancer. Erin Caled from Women's Hockey lead on the Green Ribbon campaign. Through the annual selling of Green Ribbons and a Sports Day, she was able to raise over £500. Finally, Lauren Hill and Women's Football put a big emphasis on the If In Doubt, Sit Them Out campaign.

In terms of performance, we had one National Champion, with Men's Tennis 1s lifting the cup. Our Sports Union teams also went 5/6 at Conference Cup Finals day. Your winning teams Men's Basketball 1s, Men's Football 4s, Men's Futsal 2s, Men's Tennis 5s and Women's Rugby 1s. In external cups the Men's Football 1s reached the 4th round of the Scottish Cup, the first University side to achieve this in 50 years. In the Commonwealth Games, seven Sports Union members, alumni and coaches represented their nations with 3 coming back with medals.

Finally, in our BUCS leagues this year we saw 15 league winners. These included 3 teams from mixed Golf, Netball 2s and Men's Hockey 1s who reached Tier 1 (the top Scottish League) for the first time in their history. All of this success in both leagues and cups has allowed the University to achieve their strategic aim of finishing top 15 in the BUCS points tables. As an institution we currently sit 15th which is a great achievement for our size and shows the calibre of sport here.

2.1.4 Financial Report

TM The 2021/2022 financial year saw income (including Government Grants of £53,958) at £1,427,063 (2021: £995,588, including Governments Grants of £284,576) with expenditure at £1,432,345 (2021: £977,885) and a deficit for the year of £5,282 (2021: £17,703 surplus). Following on from the year 2020/2021 the Union as well as many other organisations had another challenging year coming out of covid restrictions.

As of May 2022, there were unrestricted general funds available to the sum of £53,898 (2021: 59,180).

As well as receiving an annual block grant from the University, the Students' Union is also in receipt of a letter of comfort from the University which commits them to supporting the Union's finances.

Dickson Middleton were the independent auditors and in auditing the financial statements, concluded that the organisation is a going concern (by the way, a 'Going concern' is an accounting concept that underlies the preparation of financial statements of all UK companies. Under the going concern concept it is assumed that a company will continue in operation and that there is neither the intention nor the need either to liquidate it or to cease trading, so if you are a company, charity or business you want to be listed as a going concern in your accounts). The auditors declared that they did not identify any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

The annual accounts are available [here](#).

2.1.5 Strategic Plan

TM We are currently building a new strategic plan. For those of you unaware, the Union as a Charity, we build a strategic plan in cycles – they're usually 3 to 9 years. A couple of weeks ago, we hosted a strategy day with our current Sabbatical Officer team as well as the next year's Sabbatical Officer team as well as Union Trustees, career staff members and the University Secretary and Deputy Secretary.

We discussed the Students' Union, what it is now and what we perceive it to be, how we think students perceive it to be as well. Then we discussed how we want it to exist, how we want it to support students, you and the future at Stirling. We started to test these ideas with students and during the day in the atrium, we had a lot of feedback from students. Students told us that they want us to prioritise support, skills development and building friendships. We were also told that students want us to be student centred, supportive and they want us to value equality.

We also took a few descriptions from students who gave us ideas. They threw some ideas around, which was fantastic. Over the next few months, that strategic plan will continue to be developed. The intention is that the new strategic plan, which will cover five years, will be published in September 2023 for the start of the next academic.

For the draft strategic priorities, we have student spirit, student opportunities, student support, student voice, and the Union health. All of these things are ones that students have given back to us. It's really important that the people that you're representing are the ones developing this plan as well.

We would be really keen to hear feedback going forward about what we do and how you describe us and how you want us to describe ourselves. So a few of the favourites that came up, were "Stirling Students' Union supports, develops and represents students throughout your journey; breaking down barriers and creating change for students whilst supporting you to raise your voice". We also had "Stirling Students' Union is an independent organization and we exist to represent, reflect and service the needs of Stirling students". Finally, one was "Stirling Students' Union is a student collective that powers campus, vibrancy and champions your student experiences".

We will get in touch with those who attended the GM and the AGM regarding this as we want to hear your feedback.

2.2 Union President's Final Comments

TM I'd like to take this opportunity to say a few words about my experience as your Union President. This job has been by far the highlight of my life and I'm sure that I will say that for a long time to come. The opportunity to meet with, work with and be inspired by thousands of students is not one that I take lightly, and I'm constantly grateful for the chance to influence the student experience of so many wonderful people.

As Sabbatical Officers, we are no different to you. We are not career politicians and we don't have 15 years of experience in governance. We are often students ourselves or we graduate during our time in office. We do our absolute best to better the university experience for all students.

Despite some students and some negative experiences, we have pulled through as a team and delivered consistently for students. We are by no means perfect, but in everything we do, we do our very, very best.



I'd like to thank my Sabbatical colleagues, Jess (VP Communities) and Murray (Sports President) for a phenomenal year and hopefully a lifetime of friendship.

I'd also like to thank our Democracy and Representation Coordinator for being a constant rock and an even better friend this year. The rest of my Union colleagues, for all the guidance and love for this year.

Finally to all of our students, thank you. It's been an absolute pleasure being your President this year and it's been an honour to work with you and champion the student movement. Best of luck to all of you for the rest of your studies and to wherever life takes you. Thank you very much.

I draw this meeting to a close.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

3.1 2023/24