

Roehampton Students' Union

Trustee Board

Meeting held on Tuesday October 25th 2022 via Microsoft Teams at 5pm.

Present:

Harrison Cohen (Chair)

Sharon Azams

Mushtaq Ismail

Lee Bird

Siobhan Kelly

In attendance:

Mark Gillespire (RSU Chief Executive)

Megan Mannion (Board Secretary)

Apologies:

Eleanor Wheal

1) Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Eleanor Wheal.

2) Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest

3) Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4) Chair's report

HC gave a verbal update as chair. He noted that Freshers week was very positive and had positive feedback. He added that the programme felt much more inclusive, and students did not just have to purchase a wristband but could build their own package as well.

The Board discussed wide engagement in the events, noting that over 500 students had signed up to societies. He noted that union merchandise was also selling well, which was positive to see around campus.

HC gave an update on the academic change programme and that the students' union had held an emergency SUC meeting, which will be discussed later in the meeting. HC added that he was also working on plans for Movember and Speak Week.

SA gave an update on Black History Month activities and events, noting that on and off campus trips had taken place and the majority have been free to keep them accessible for students. Additionally, SA has been running an accessibility campaign and walkaround campaign with Estates and also looking at earlier timetabling provision and accessibility for accommodation.

Mustaq Ismail gave update on her work so far. She noted work on the TEF and what the student input into that is. MI has also been having conversations about validation panels, with the University having created 33 new programmes. Previously the Union were involved in the process and have been working with Head of Membership Services to develop training for students to be involved in the process. MI and SA raised this at Senate recently, especially in relation to decolonisation and EDI work in relation to curriculum content.

The Board discussed the changing demographic of the student body and how that relates to engagement with the Union, noting a lot more commuter students now so there is a need to shift to more daytime events and need to respond to how demographics have changed.

5) CEO report

MG presented the report as read.

In September, University agreed the block grant at their Finance and Resources Committee. MG met with Baljit Kaur about the finance service level agreement and arguing for an increase in funding. MG is going to put together some scenarios by the end of Q2 on how the Union is performing against budget and what extent of additional funding is required. The Union has been invited to go to University Executive Board with a proposal for additional funding. The Union had a useful conversation about having a long-term financial strategy, which is required. RSU operates on a year-by-year basis and is linked to the University pay scales. University have offered to support developing a five-year forecast and some long-term planning.

MG also discussed changes to university recruitment and demographics, noting a decrease in International Students and a decrease across social science subjects.

The Board discussed the University's recruitment profile and their long-term plans and how the Union needs to understand and respond to a quickly shifting university demographic and understanding what the student population needs.

There was a discussion around student complaints, with the Board noting that the business school has the highest number of complaints, which is likely linked to the rapid expansion of the department. There was a discussion around the Independent Student Submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework. Previously, the students' union was not able to use its own data in the submission. This year, there has been change and students' unions are able to use their own data. As a small organisation, the majority of student data comes from Speak Week activities and the SU has around 200 longform feedback. RSU also has data from academic advice and complaints.

6) SUC report

MI presented the report from the emergency SUC report. Three proposals were passed unanimously and related to course cuts. It was noted that having the meetings in person really helped with the engagement in the meeting. The Board was asked to note the report.

7) Annual review of register of interests

MG presented the paper, asking trustees to review the register of interests as required annually and to note the register. The paper was noted.

8) Annual review of risk register

MG presented the risk register. The board noted that the financial risk remains high due to ending the last financial year in deficit and trying to build back reserves. The Board considered the high and moderate risks. MG suggested that it would be worthwhile reviewing at the end of Q2 in order to assess the risk register in the context of performing against budget and potential additional funding.

SK asked about the risk around resourcing and the risk of the cost of living crisis. MG will add this to the risk register.

The Board discussed removing or reducing the Covid-19 risk.

The Board discussed the possibility of discussing risk appetite in the future and understanding the extent of which the Board is willing to accept certain risks.

There was a brief discussion about affiliation to NUS and whether this should be discussed as a future issue.

Action: NUS affiliation to be added to a future agenda.

9) External and PTO Trustee Appointments

The Chair gave a verbal update. The Board noted the appointment of Reverend Nick Leggett as an external trustee and have extended an offer of appointment to a part-time officer trustee. The Board agreed to progress recruitment of a postgraduate student trustee.

10) 2023 RSU Elections plan

The Board reviewed the RSU elections plan and approved the re-appointment of NUS as the Returning Officer for the elections. MG updated the Board on the operational plans for the elections.

There was a discussion about by-elections and whether there would be feasibility to fulfil these roles within the 22/23 academic year if unfilled. HC confirmed this could be done via co-option at SUC.

11) Freshers' week update

MG presented the paper, noting that Freshers' week went really well. The build-up to the programme was slightly disrupted by the death of the late Queen but this did not affect the delivery of the programme. 42 events were delivered across the week and there was positive feedback from the week. There was a 70-30 split between new and returning students accessing the events and around 3000 students attended the Freshers' Fair. There was high

engagement with mature students. The Union will be assessing satisfaction through the new and returning students' survey that the University undertakes.

There was a five-fold increase in individual ticket sales for events. RSU worked with Native, a marketing agency who work with national brands for sponsorship and made around £19,000 via this. There was a £7,000 surplus from Freshers' Week and felt like a pre-pandemic event. The Board commented that the week felt very positive.

12) Any Other Business

HC noted that UCU had voted for UK-wide strike action, which is likely to impact on Roehampton students and a proposal on whether to support the strikes or not will be taken to SUC.

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 7pm.