**3rd Week Hilary Term 2024 Student Council**

**TIME: 17:30**

**DATE: Tuesday 30th January 2024**

**LOCATION:**

If you have any questions about Student Council, please feel free to contact:
**Chair of Oxford SU Council: chair@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk**

**SU Staff: studentengagement@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk**

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**A. Minutes of the previous meeting**

See Week 3 Michaelmas 2023, and Week 7 Michaelmas 2023: <https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/minutes/>

**B. Matters arising from the minutes**

**C. Reports from and questions to Sabbatical Trustees**

Written reports can be found here: <https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/>

**Vice-President Liberation and Equality – summary**

The report by Kennedy Aliu, Vice-President Liberation and Equality, covers progress on manifesto pledges, project updates, events, committee meetings, and future. Key focuses include strengthening EDI initiatives, refugee support, and disability justice. Progress involves collaboration on workshops, advocacy for Oxford Sanctuary Status, and the development of a Refugee Campaign Constitution. Events like the EDI Roundtable and lectures on critical race theory aim to engage the Oxford community. Future plans include events to increase EDI engagement, showcasing the ongoing commitment to liberation and equality initiatives within the university.

**Vice-President Postgraduate Education and Access**

Nick Harris's report as Vice-President Postgraduate Education and Access focuses on enhancing postgraduate representation, graduate accommodation, and postgraduate community engagement. Harris has made progress in the Student Union Review working group to propose new structures for better representation. The Graduate Accommodation Board's final report suggests improvements in housing, and events like Hilary Happy Hour and the Course Representative Forum have fostered community and information sharing. Harris participated in various committee meetings, contributing to discussions on application fees, taught degrees, and SU restructuring. Future plans include hosting hustings for SU elections candidates.

**VP Undergraduate Access and Education – summary**

Jenni Lynam's report as the VP Undergraduate Access and Education highlights efforts in academic support, access and participation, and student welfare. Initiatives include an academic bridging scheme, the creation of an Access and Participation Plan (APP) working group, and a new academic mentoring program. Lynam has been active in policy changes to support suspended students and hosted events to connect students with trade unions and provide prelims advice. Committee involvements focus on digital services, admissions, and quality assurance. Future plans aim to enhance student welfare services and educational quality through various university committees and working groups.

**VP Activities & Community – summary**

Mia Clement's report outlines her work as VP Activities & Community, detailing progress on climate education, biodiversity, and community engagement, including the creation of a gardening collective and the installation of Swift Boxes. Projects such as the Environmental Affairs Campaign and Trans-inclusive Sports Policy highlight her commitment to inclusivity and sustainability. Notable events include a Social Action Fair and collaborations with Oxford Hub. Future plans focus on environmental and community engagement, showcasing a proactive approach to her role's challenges and opportunities.

**Vice-President Welfare - summary**

Rosalie Chapman's report as the Vice-President Welfare outlines significant progress on manifesto commitments, including reforms on disciplinary procedures related to sexual violence, combating period poverty, and the adoption of anti-sexual harassment policies across colleges. Chapman has advocated for more Black, LGBTQ+, and female counsellors, lobbied for a reading week, and enhanced welfare training. She has also engaged in policy advocacy and project development concerning student welfare and harassment policies. Future plans include mental health first aid workshops and continued efforts to improve university policies on misconduct and student welfare.

**Scrutiny Committee Report – Refer to full report**

The Scrutiny Committee's Termly Report on Sabbatical Trustees for MT23, authored by Daniel Leung and Oluwaseun Sowunmi, evaluates the performance of sabbatical officers against their manifesto points, council mandates, and additional projects. It categorizes achievements as completed, partially completed, or not completed, covering various initiatives like climate education, diversity and inclusion efforts, access and education projects, and welfare improvements. Each officer's section provides detailed comments on their progress, illustrating the committee's thorough review process to hold trustees accountable and highlight areas for continued focus and improvement.

**Questions regarding the scrutiny report**

A question is asked about the absence of a scrutiny report on the SU President, sabbatical officers present were unable to give a response but referred to the statement by the SU CEO at council MT7. A follow-up question is asked about a scrutiny report for SU President is possible, sabbatical officers present were unable to give a response but referred to the statement by the SU CEO at council MT7.

A question is asked about whether the potential cost implications of the SU VP PG and A’s work around potential creating new sabbatical positions were looked into. SU VP PG and A responded saying they’ve looked at various different ways of limiting the financial burden such as part time employment, 50/50 split between PG and UG officers, restructuring etc

**D.** Reports from and questions to LGBTQ+ Campaign, Disabilities Campaign, Women\*s Campaign, Class Act, and Environmental affairs campaign

Written reports can be found here: <https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/>

**LGBTQ+ Campaign - summary**

The LGBTQ+ Campaign report, chaired by Bella Done and Joel Aston, showcases achievements and future goals related to advocacy, community building, and educational initiatives. Key accomplishments include the passing of a motion for SU GE Fund, organizing a memorial for TDOR with comprehensive welfare provisions, hosting a successful Trans awareness week event, and leading a protest against anti-trans sentiment. The campaign also focused on EDI commitments and intersectional advocacy, such as participating in the University's EDI roundtable and celebrating QPOC stories. Future targets aim to continue these efforts, with plans for LGBTQ+ history month, community support activities, and collaborative events with other campaigns.

**Disabilities Campaign - summary**

The Disabilities Campaign (DisCam) report, led by Linnet Drury and Aerija Jeffries-Shaw, highlights the achievements and future plans focused on fostering inclusive communities, raising awareness on disability issues, and supporting self-advocacy among students. Key accomplishments include a series of social events, awareness campaigns, and the revival of a fortnightly newsletter. Future targets aim at developing a handbook for navigating Oxford as a disabled student, strengthening the reps community, and conducting research for policy change. The report emphasizes ongoing efforts to improve conditions and support for disabled students at Oxford.

 **Wom\*Cam report - summary**

The Wom\*Cam report by Maia Hamilton and Farabee Pushpita highlights ongoing and completed initiatives aimed at addressing disparities faced by women in academia at Oxford. Achievements include hosting events like Illustrated Poetry and Board Game Night, and advancing the Oxford Period proposal with support from college heads. Future plans involve collaborations for academic feminism discussions, zine making focusing on indie publishing and feminism, and organizing an International Women's Day march. The report underscores the campaign's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment and addressing gender-based issues.

**The Class Act Report - summary**

The Class Act Report by Alfie Davis and Eleanor Miller showcases successful initiatives aimed at supporting socio-economically disadvantaged students at Oxford. They raised over £7000 for Oxford Mutual Aid, conducted a significant survey on structural classism, and hosted influential speaker events. The report also highlights the publication of a Financial Guide and guides on formal wear, alongside hosting various community-building events. Progress on establishing a Second-Hand Sub Fusc scheme and supporting estranged students is noted. Future targets include maintaining guides, organizing more events, and ensuring the Class Act campaign remains a key player in advocating for improved vacation residence policies and engagement during the freshers' week.

**The Environmental Affairs Campaign Report - summary**

The Environmental Affairs Campaign, led by Luca Di Bona, is a new initiative aiming to shape its future through the election of a strong committee, advocating for fossil fuel divestment, and educating the community through events like an open meeting and a biofuels talk. The campaign is in its early stages, focusing on community engagement and collaboration with various environmental groups to support broader environmental campaigns. Future plans include solidifying the campaign's committee structure and executing educational and advocacy activities to fulfil its environmental objectives.

**E.** Reports from and questions to Divisional Representatives for MPLS and Social Sciences.

Written reports can be found here: <https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/>

**MPLS undergraduate**

Aneshka Moudry's report for the MPLS division covers undergraduate issues related to Bodleian libraries' lending categories, double marking procedures for essay-style exams, and feedback on library facilities, especially concerning the opening of the RSL. Moudry is coordinating with divisional heads to address these issues through surveys and direct feedback. Additionally, efforts are underway to improve communication channels for course representatives, aiming to establish more effective feedback mechanisms. The report indicates ongoing projects, including a review of the National Student Survey (NSS) to identify areas of improvement in undergraduate teaching within MPLS.

**MPLS postgraduate**

Daiki Tagami, a postgraduate representative for the MPLS division, focuses on addressing issues like conference funding, living costs, and teaching responsibilities. Through meetings and surveys, Tagami has reported these concerns, emphasizing the need for increased funding and support. Plans include summarizing survey results to propose changes and addressing living costs and teaching loads in future meetings. The report highlights active efforts to improve conditions for DPhil students in the MPLS division.

**Social Sciences undergraduate**

Callum Lloyd's report for the Social Sciences Division details issues such as gender disparities in admissions and suggestions from the National Student Survey (NSS) on teaching quality, assessment feedback, and exam formats. Actions include proposing solutions for highlighted issues and liaising with departments on implementing changes, such as introducing a plenary lecture and diversifying exam formats. Challenges include engaging course reps for feedback, with low attendance at a recent forum. Future plans involve continued efforts to address student and examination concerns, with a scheduled Student Representative Board meeting.

**Social Sciences postgraduate**

Emma Somos, the postgraduate representative for the Social Sciences Division, reports on meetings attended, issues arising, and actions taken. Topics include unfunded DPhil student support, course integration, scheduling of research methods courses, research opportunity communication, Bodleian library suggestions, and part-time student community building. Future actions involve creating an anonymous form for feedback, discussing issues in departmental meetings, and organizing events for part-time students. Challenges such as accessibility concerns for in-person typed exams and communication of course timetables are highlighted, with plans for interdisciplinary socials and improved cross-departmental communication.

**F.** Reports from projects approved and confirmed by council

Written reports can be found here: <https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/>

**Ox.Social**

The "ox.social" project, led by Tom Campbell, is an initiative to create an ethical, decentralized, and democratic social media platform. The project has involved purchasing the domain ox.social, discussions for integration with Youni's services, and collaborations with the University's IT teams for separate but integrated University presence. Publicity efforts have begun, with plans to officially launch the service at the start of Trinity term. The project aims to address social media's societal impact and increase Oxford's student community involvement. Future plans include raising awareness about social media issues and exploring collaborations with other universities.

**Science Policy Discussions project**

The Science Policy Discussions project, led by Kai Sandbrink and Jirko Rubruck, has seen a successful term with its initial events, including talks on the social structure of science and the peer review system, attracting significant interest. Collaborating with the Postgraduate Society, the project maintains an active WhatsApp group with over 230 members to foster discussions. Future plans include adapting the event format due to Kai's temporary departure and enhancing online presence through platforms like Notion. The project aims to continue its growth and engagement with the student community.

**G.** Items for resolution

1. **Securing Vacation Residence for Vulnerable Students**

The proposer introduces the motion focusing on enhancing Vacation Residence for vulnerable students, highlighting the challenges faced despite the university's commitment under the 2018 Stand Alone Pledge. The motion advocates for accessible, flexible, reliable, and affordable vacation residence, especially for estranged and care-experienced students. It mandates collaboration among SU officers and the university to develop inclusive policies and ensure the fulfilment of the Stand Alone Pledge, aiming to secure stable accommodation for students in need year-round.

1. **Organising a Second-Hand Sub Fusc Scheme**

The proposer introduces the motion with the following claims: It aims to establish an SU policy for a Second-Hand Sub Fusc Scheme. This initiative addresses the discontinuation of a previous scheme due to the withdrawal of partnership organizations. It recognizes the high demand and limited supply for such a scheme, which helps alleviate the financial and cultural barriers associated with sub-fusc for disadvantaged students. The motion proposes organizing a scheme for free second-hand subfusc collection, collaborating with various student organizations and committees, and ensuring wide publicity to reach all eligible students, including those participating in the Opportunity Oxford program.

Inquiries were raised about including postgraduate students in the scheme, acknowledging that many face similar financial challenges. Consequently, an amendment was proposed to involve the VP Postgraduate in the initiative, updating the language from "JCR committees" to "common rooms" to encompass all student living areas. Another amendment seeks to mandate the involved sabbatical officers to explore solutions for the issue of students not being reimbursed by their colleges for the cost of scholars' gowns.

1. **Divestment**

Introduction by proposer: The motion seeks to align the university's ethical practices with those of the SU regarding engagement with organizations. It highlights discrepancies in current policies concerning recruitment, investments, and acceptance of donations from ethically questionable entities, particularly those involved in arms manufacturing, fossil fuel industry, and other sectors conflicting with SU's ethical code. The resolution mandates the President and VP Activities and Community to lobby for university-wide adoption of stringent ethical criteria for all forms of engagement with external organizations, prioritizing divestment from fossil fuels as an initial step.

Concerns regarding the broad scope of point C were addressed, emphasizing that these points reflect council-agreed positions, with the motion aimed at negotiating based on these established principles. Regarding potential impacts on Oxford scholarships funded by ethically dubious sources, it was acknowledged as a critical ethical discussion worth pursuing. The term "reasonable person" was queried for definition, to which it was responded that, although not strictly defined, it serves to encompass cases that might not be explicitly covered but are ethically relevant.

1. **Trustee Board Accountability & Transparency**

The proposer introduces and summarises their motion: The motion aims to enhance the transparency and accountability of the Trustee Board by amending the SU's Bye-Laws. It stipulates the inclusion of a report on decisions made outside general meetings by the trustee board in the President's termly report to the council. This amendment is designed to ensure students are informed, in a timely manner, about trustee decisions, including those made in confidentiality, with provisions for exceptional circumstances where direct reporting to the council may not be possible.

**H.** Project Proposals for resolution

The proposer summarises the proposal as follows:

Launched in January 2020, "Markers for Mindfulness" addresses budget cuts in education by redistributing donated stationery to schools, aiming to reallocate savings towards mental health initiatives. With £60,000 in donations aiding schools, including in Didcot, the project's founder seeks to expand into Oxford, especially targeting areas like Blackbird Leys. Plans include setting up collection points, organizing sorting teams, and hosting termly distribution events. A spending request of £100 covers storage and transport materials to streamline donations. The project's vision extends to establishing a nationwide network, fostering community support for local schools.

**I.** Items for Discussion

 **Extraordinary Meeting Processes**

The discussion proposes making it easier to call an extraordinary council meeting, reflecting the recent change to council meetings from fortnightly to monthly. The suggestion includes reducing the requirement from five Constituent Organisations or 100 Student Members to three Constituent Organisations or 40 Student Members to initiate such a meeting.

A member suggests reducing the threshold for calling an extraordinary council meeting to 40 Student Members, citing the impracticality of the current 100-member requirement. This adjustment is viewed as enhancing democratic processes, potentially facilitating motions like no confidence votes. Debate on scheduling council meetings earlier to avoid late finishes was met with concerns over academic conflicts, highlighting the need to balance inclusivity and practical considerations.

**J.** Any other business