

Oxford SU

Conference of Common Rooms

19:00-21:00, Tuesday 3rd February, HB Allen Centre, Keble College

Minutes

Present: Shermar Pryce, President for Communities and Common Rooms; Alisa Brown, SU President for Welfare, Equity & Inclusion

Chair: Shermar Pryce (President for Community & Common Rooms)

Deputy Chairs:

- Vacant
- Rhys Inward (MCR President - Jesus) (absent)

In attendance:

Balliol JCR
Harris Manchester MCR
Lincoln MCR
Linacre MCR
Magdalen JCR
Merton MCR

New College JCR
Somerville JCR
Somerville MCR
St Anne's JCR
St Antony's MCR

St Hugh's JCR
St Peters MCR
Wadham JCR
Wolfson SA
Worcester JCR

Apologies: Seun Sowunmi, SU President for Undergraduates

1. Introduction

- SP (Shermar Pryce) thanked all those who stayed on after Oxford SU Elections Hustings.

2. Governance Matters

- Vacancy for JCR President Deputy Chair announced but no candidates stepped forward. Noted that only 3 JCR Presidents were present, decision deferred to next meeting.
- MT W7 Minutes ratified with no comments.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Officer Updates

- SP presented new format of Sabbatical Officer updates in the way of a pre-submitted paper. Representatives were invited to discuss this format to assess the effectiveness.
 - 25 committees attended by the MCR/JCR, 29 meetings in total since the last CCR.

Comments:

- St Catz MCR: Further clarification sought about College Disparities Monitor.
 - SP responded, noting one meeting has been held with the newly convened SU working group.
- St Catz MCR: Further clarification sought about the Supreme Court ruling response.
 - AB responded, noting concerns about exclusion criteria of TNB+ students in sports. AB wants to make non-competitive spaces as inclusive as possible, which she discussed with the relevant committees. AB confirmed an intention to expand the gender expression fund.
- St Catz MCR: Further clarification sought about EIRRS.
 - AB responded and will share further information when it is provided by the university. Noted the SU submission is on the website.
- St Catz MCR: Enquiry about EIRRS and representation from the university to CCR.
 - AB noted this will happen once the report has been published. Likely the end of Hilary or the start of Trinity.
- St Catz MCR: Further clarification sought about university policies for TNB+ students to inform future motion ideas.
 - AB acknowledged not enough information is further known, but that it sports inclusion should be considered.

Items for Discussion

4. Wider Student Access to University Committees

Proposed by: Queen's MCR President (Passed at Queen's MCR Meeting in Michaelmas 2025)

Decision Type: Conference Mandate

Presented by: Queen's MCR President was absent, and this motion was not formally presented and will be brought back to the next CCR.

Proposal: To require the SU to lobby the University to widen attendance of non-Sabbatical Officers at key University committees.

Discussion:

Oxford SU CEO presented on university committee membership, including a clarification of University Council.

Oxford SU CEO: University Council is governed by a Kings Statute, and any changes would need the approval of the monarchy. The SU is able to lobby committees to change the representation of committees, but the SU does not determine how many students or who can attend these committee FTOs are elected representatives of all students and do not represent their own views. Extensive consultations are undertaken to ensure the FTOs are

informed on a broad range of experiences. FTOs are supported by SU staff, so they can effectively engage with university committees.

Oxford SU CEO: noted the importance of RepComs and newly established PGR/UG focus groups to engage a larger demographic. FTOs are employees and must follow employment law, including confidentiality. The university may have concerns about students sitting in confidential committees. FTOs can struggle with navigating and communicating sensitive matters that may be confidential. The SU is reviewing this challenge and seeking ways to improve communication.

St Catz MCR: queried voting rights of FTOs

Oxford SU CEO: FTOs do not have voting rights on most committees, which is rare in comparison to other SUs

SP: reflected on committees he sits on, most committees FTOs don't have voting rights but not much voting takes place, and it is generally by consensus.

WTW: even if SU representatives did have voting rights, their impact would be minimal. However, FTOs are strongly representing student voice on these committees and attempting to improve transparency around communicating the work of FTOs to students. FTOs recently met with the VC, who shared FTOs concerns on this.

Linacre MCR: concern that extra representation would create further bureaucracy and instead we should be pushing for voting rights

Oxford SU CEO: concern that students volunteering their time to attend these meetings while also studying could have a concerning impact on their wellbeing

St Anthony's GCR: having one student vote can change the outcome of meetings, particularly if it was the only vote in opposition. Voting rights are key, concurs that we should be strengthening the SU position in these committees. Another student representative in these committees doesn't matter, what we really need is the SU-Common Room communication/relationship needs to be streamlined and strengthened. This motion won't fix that.

St Anne's JCR: served as JCR rep on senior tutors committee for three terms, a position which existed because the senior tutors wanted a JCR rep as they may be more credible than SU reps. The SU doesn't have the power to appoint reps; it is down to the committee. With respect to the role itself, it isn't necessary if the connection to the SU is strong. Workload on common room presidents needs reducing, not increasing.

?: Reflecting on the governance of Council it looks very difficult to amend the charter to change membership. Instead, advocating for SU vote in the Council is important but other forms of representation may be useful.

St Catz MCR: concern that the university consensus does not represent student voice, e.g. EIRRS not reflecting the views of JCRs/MCRs. Concern that this is due to a lack of pressure.

SP: not every decision is made by consensus, but the vast majority on. Student consultations do take place to inform decisions. More can be done but the collegiate nature of Oxford makes it difficult to understand all student experiences.

Oxford SU CEO: the university is listening to CCR, as they see CCR as a forum of representation

AB: One SU vote can represent thousands of students. Understand that a campaign for voting rights would be difficult. Notes that minutes can be a way of recording student opposition to university decisions. Consensus based decision making can favour student voice because of minutes.

Linacre MCR: not just about the vote, it is about being an equal player at the table. Worth the fight long term. Students have a right to be at the table, not just because they want to be part of the discussion.

SP: as non-voting members, FTOs miss out on reserved business

Student: In 2028 the Council are due another self-review, the SU should advocate for voting rights or a more sustainable mechanism of student representation

WTW: FTOs are legitimate representatives of students but if FTOs became university trustees then they would be required to put the university first. Pushing for voting rights would change the priority from advocating for students to protecting the uni. Could cause conflicts of interest. The SU should be in reserved meetings; we should push for this.

Oxford SU CEO: suggests that Cambridge SU may provide a lay student member to avoid conflict of interest WTW raised.

AB: accepts point that FTOs are not viewed as equals to university staff. The point of CCR is to signal to the university the views of MCR/JCR Presidents.

St Catz MCR: It is in the university's interest to listen to student interests. Raises the idea that every motion CCR passes should receive a response from the university leadership team. This could empower CCR.

SP: this motion will be brought back to CCR in Week 7, to provide an opportunity for the proposer to be present. The proposer was absent due to exceptional circumstances.

5. SU Sessions

1. Examinations Survey

WTW highlighted a new SU survey collecting the experiences and views of students in exams. WTW invited comments on mitigating circumstances and feedback on in person exams

St Catz: air conditioning in exam halls

St Anne's JCR: online exams have received a mixed response, particularly due to uncertainties around how this would work and disparities this could create e.g. different types of laptops

WTW: noted international students may also have challenges accessing laptops

Student: adjustments can be easy to get.

Merton JCR: students struggle to get exam access arrangements, may be easier with diagnosed conditions but there are mitigating circumstances outside of health needs, but many students don't know the process exists, or the process is too long.

Lincoln MCR: significant delays with the disability advisory service, which can be particularly difficult for postgrads with shorter course times. Can cause stress.

Wolfson SA: most students don't sit exams but there are issues with tutors not reading support plans, there is a lack of communication between the disability advisory service and colleges

2. All I Want for Oxmas Student Survey Presentation (Impact Associate)

An Impact Associate reported on findings from an SU campaign in December 2025.

Over half of respondents want more pop-up SU events, 20% wanted greater informational support, 18% wanted greater financial support, including more affordable food options and cheaper formals/balls, 9% sought infrastructural changes including fixing heating.

172 responses to the second question 'if you could change one thing at Oxford what would it be': 24% wanted financial support, 18% wanted greater academic support, 15% wanted infrastructural changes to Oxford including public social spaces

Next steps: the SU can explore events and stronger communication, themes analysed here will go to PTOs

3. Student SSO Expiry Period Change (Oxford SU President for Welfare, Equity & Inclusion)

AB identified that the University is seeking student feedback on a proposed plan to amend SSO expiry date, which was changed during the pandemic. The SSO includes wireless network access, an Oxford email address, and university information. The university has security concerns about this and wants to move from 23 months and return to 11 months expiry.

Lincoln MCR: there are not enough graduation dates for graduates, and many students have to wait at least 2 years to book to attend

St Catz MCR: prefers a permanent SSO, as email addresses can be used for professional purposes. Losing access to that email address leads to loss of data.

AB: clarified that there is an email address for alumni which ends ox.ac.uk

St Antony's GCR: email addresses are included in academic journal papers that postgrads may publish, losing access to that email address causes complications for anyone who wants to contact a student who publishes. What is the difference in security vulnerabilities between 11 months and 23 months?

AB: did query this and was told it doubles the amount of time someone has greater access to university systems

St Anthony's GCR: concern that loss of email address could also lead to loss of payroll information for graduate students. Many other universities provide email addresses.

AB: clarified that in committee AB advocated for 23 months and spoke against 11 months.

St Anne's JCR: From the evidence in CCR, many other universities have continued access.

AB: if you return to the university, you regain access

Wolfson SA: graduation dates are a real problem, the 2-year window is a strange time period

(?) MCR: alumni rep in the MCR cannot use outlook because they don't have SSOs despite the college being strict with the MCR on use of Microsoft platforms.

Wadham: Concern about GDPR violation if someone downloaded all the information, including research data, from an email address

Merton JCR: in 2022 the process communicated was 2 months, so uncertain about SSOs

St Catz MCR: seems there is consensus that SSOs should not expire. A motion could be drafted for CCR.

AB: suggested a joint meeting with Linacre MCR and St Anthony's GCR.

SP: before a motion is submitted, SP will raise with the digital committee the security concerns.

AB: A motion on this matter will be brought to CCR in Week 7, as members feel strongly about this.

4. Graduate Accommodation Rent Setting (Oxford SU President for Postgraduates)

WTW seeks feedback on rent negotiations, cost of rent, affordability.

Linacre MCR: 47.8% UKRI stipends have gone up since 2015 while rents have gone up in Oxford at least 54%, some have given up 64%. DPhils are struggling to afford to live in university accommodation. Oxford is one of the most expensive cities to live in. Colleges need to consider graduate rent.

St Catz MCR: international students struggle to find off campus accommodation, particularly as 6 months rent has to be paid up front, possibly a legacy from covid. Concern about the cost of rent up front. Urges the university to change this policy to make it easier for international students to rent off campus.

Wolfson SA: The most expensive accommodation is 2/3 the amount of a monthly DPhil stipend. Bank account requirements can be an issue for international students.

WTW: seeks clarification that CCR is in opposition to rent increases

St Anthony's GCR: rent negotiations is difficult, the best way forward is for MCRs to present alternative increases that are below inflation but more manageable.

AB: CPR 3.4% answer is possibly to seek in line with inflation, so quality of life remains the same rather than getting worse.

Below the Line (final approval – not for discussion unless requested)

6. Transforming University Sports Facilities to Meet Student Needs

7. AOB:

- Linacre MCR: feedback from JCR/MCR session last week that Presidents didn't get much time to interact, overly led by Presidents
- SP: agrees
- AB: acknowledges the below the line motion from last CCR and the importance of lobbying the university for

- SP: reminds everyone to read the candidate statements, vote in the SU elections and engage with the election

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 3rd March (Week 7), 18:00-20:00, location (same): Lecture Theatre, H B Allen Centre.

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES