

Oxford SU

Conference of Common Rooms

18:00-20:00, Tuesday 3rd March, HB Allen Centre, Keble College

Minutes

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

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

Deputy Chairs:

- Rhys Inward (MCR President – Jesus)
- Vacant (JCR President Deputy Chair)

In attendance:

Balliol JCR
Harris Manchester MCR
Jesus MCR
Lincoln MCR
Magdalen JCR
Mansfield JCR
Merton MCR

Queens MCR
Regent's Park MCR
Somerville MCR
St Anne's JCR
St Antony's MCR
St Catz MCR
St Cross SRC

St John's MCR
St Peter's MCR
Wadham MCR
Wadham SU
Wolfson MCR

Apologies: Seun Sowunmi, SU President for Undergraduates

1. Introduction

- SP opened the meeting and welcomed representatives

2. Governance Matters

- Noted that this was Rhys Inward's final CCR as MCR Deputy Chair. SP thanked Rhys for his contribution this academic year.
- Vacancy for JCR Deputy Chair remains unfilled.
- Voting will now open in the room (from 18:00) in response to feedback.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Officer Updates

SP, AB and WW provided updates on their ongoing work.

- College Disparities Monitor:
 - Lincoln MCR asked when the monitor would go live.
SP confirmed development is ongoing and data is being reviewed in consultation with Common Rooms.
- International Student Levy:
 - Harris Manchester MCR enquired about the levy; WW confirmed further updates would follow.
- MSL / Voting Platform:
 - Lincoln MCR raised continued concerns that the voting platform remains cumbersome.
 - SU confirmed a review of interface phases is ongoing and automated vote counting is expected by the end of week.
- Supreme Court Ruling:
 - St Catz MCR asked how the SU is collecting student insight following the Supreme Court ruling.
 - AB: currently engaging with NUS workstreams and relevant committees, but welcome greater attendance at LGBTQ+ RepCom
- National Travel and Hardship Support:
 - A question was raised regarding whether Oxford Brookes subsidised the previous bus scheme offered.
 - AB confirmed Oxford Brookes University had subsidised the scheme.
- EIRRS Expansion:
 - Somerville MCR requested a further update.
 - SU CEO confirmed that a University update is due this week.

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.

Questions and comments:

- Lincoln MCR expressed concern that this may add bureaucracy and suggested focus should instead be on securing voting rights for Sabbatical Officers.
- St Antony's GCR queried the benefit of an additional non-voting member.

- Harris Manchester JCR asked for clarification on the advantages of the proposal.
- Queen's MCR argued that only two student representatives currently sit on Council and that a third, non-SU representative could widen perspectives. Voting rights were described as a separate but valid issue.
- AB clarified that CCR mandates the SU's lobbying position but cannot mandate Common Rooms.
- WW highlighted differences between Cambridge and Oxford governance structures and noted the substantial workload of Council papers (often 200–300 pages), raising wellbeing concerns for unpaid students.
- AB: Sabbatical Officers benefit from contextual understanding gained through attendance at multiple committees before matters reach Council.

Comments FOR the motion:

- There were no comments FOR the motion.

Comments AGAINST the motion:

- St Catz MCR: Sabbatical Officers are elected to represent students in these spaces.
- St Antony's GCR: Concern about reliance on a single lay student and suggested focus instead on voting rights for existing SU representatives.
- Somerville MCR: Questioned whether the role would be feasible alongside academic commitments.

5. University Guarantor Service

Proposed by: Wadham MCR Seconded by: St Antony's GCR SU President for Communities and Common Rooms SU President for Postgraduates SU President for Welfare, Equity and Inclusion

Decision Type: Conference Mandate

Presented by: Wadham MCR

Proposal: This motion mandates the Student Union to lobby the University of Oxford to establish a rent guarantor service for students lacking a UK-based guarantor by the 2026–27 academic year. The proposal aims to mitigate the impact of the Renters' Rights Act 2025, which will ban upfront rent payments and remove the primary method international students currently use to secure private accommodation.

Questions:

- No questions were raised.

Comments FOR the motion:

- AB: If other universities operate such schemes, Oxford should be able to.
- St Antony's GCR: Strongly supported implementation ahead of Michaelmas to support underprivileged and international students.

- St Cross SRC: Highlighted housing anxiety for international students and the need to avoid exploitative landlords.

Comments AGAINST the motion:

- No comments were raised AGAINST.

6. University Email Preservation

Proposed by: Xiangyue (Max) Wang (St. Catherine's MCR). Seconded by: Alec Elías Sigurðarson (Wadham MCR), Jessica Ryan-Smith (Lincoln MCR), Jairus Tristan Patoc (Somerville MCR), Marcell Szakály (Merton MCR), Nick Lang (Keble JCR)

Decision Type: Conference Mandate

Presented by: Xiangyue (Max) Wang (St. Catherine's MCR)

Proposal: The motion mandates the sabbatical officers to advocate at the University Council and any relevant committee for the permanent preservation of students' university emails, or to allow alumni to set up forwarding from their old university address to an Oxford alumni address.

Questions and comments:

- SP noted that he had contacted the Chief Information Officer regarding alumni access and barriers to implementation. The University indicated willingness to explore the issue further with the Alumni Office. SP summarised concerns previously raised at CCR, including delays to graduation, lack of data and document access and benefit of maintaining an Oxford account in professional contexts.
- AB noted that many universities provide 12-month access following status change and further clarification from Oxford is being sought. AB has feedback to the University previously raised points.

Comments FOR the motion:

- Harris Manchester JCR: Noted at the Saïd Business School that some departments retain email access and questioned inconsistency across the University.

Comments AGAINST the motion:

- No comments were raised AGAINST.

7. SU Sessions

1. Student loan reform (President for Welfare, Equity & Inclusion)

- AB provided an overview of proposed changes to student loan structures and emphasised the importance of acting collectively to prevent precedent-setting reforms detrimental to students. AB also outlined plan to attend an All-Party Parliamentary Meeting on student loan reform next week to lobby for change.
- Wolfson MCR asked whether advocacy would expand to postgraduate loans.

- AB noted PG loans are larger and present additional risk; current focus is undergraduate reform, but expansion remains possible and asked for all representatives to act now before further, harmful reform takes place.

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

8. AOB:

MCR/JCR Benefits and Recognition

- Lincoln MCR raised concerns that Common Room leadership roles are high workload with limited recognition or benefits.
- Benefits suggested included: housing ballot priority, High Table access, rent discounts, expanded committee budgets, meals/formals provided
- Jesus MCR: Supported benchmarking benefits across colleges to understand differences and build evidence.
- Wadham SU: Acknowledged roles are demanding but noted some pushback where perks resemble payment for what can be seen as a charitable role. Main challenge is recruiting committee members due to workload; incentives may help.
- St Antony's GCR: Committee members should be properly supported (e.g., housing within college communities) to enable their work; current recognition is insufficient given workload.
- Jesus MCR: Successfully advocated for inclusion in a housing ballot as a benefit.
- Lincoln MCR: Benefits should not be limited to housing; broader recognition is needed.
- Merton MCR cautioned against excessive perks incentivising the role for the wrong reasons.
- Wolfson MCR: Conducted an internal entitlement review; some roles receive benefits (e.g., meals or housing). Housing ballot timing currently misaligned with committee election cycles.
- St Cross SRC: Colleges recognise the workload but collective advocacy across CCR could strengthen calls for support and reduce burden on representatives.
- St Antony's GCR suggested CCR could collate data and the SU could write collectively to Heads of Houses.
- SP emphasised that democratic accountability within Common Rooms would balance issues associated with .

CCR Engagement and Quoracy

- Jesus MCR raised frustration regarding quoracy and engagement levels; suggested lowering quoracy to average turnout and emphasised the value of social elements (like PresCom) to boost attendance.
- Lincoln MCR: Agreed with concerns about quoracy and engagement.
- SP: Noted PresCom formals help engagement; presidents are busy; sometimes more attend than vote; issues with rep contact data and exploring role-based voting accounts.
- Wadham SU: CCR voting is time-consuming; suggested exploring hybrid in-person and online voting.
- St Antony's GCR: Attendance at CCR is optional; suggested constitutional review to include mandated engagement clauses and enforcement mechanisms.

- SU CEO: SU cannot mandate CR leaders to attend; changes would require common rooms to submit a motion to amend SU bye-laws.
- St Catz' MCR: Surveys students on agenda items to increase engagement; suggested more time for motions and a clear appeals process.
- Merton MCR: SU should not police common rooms; instead communicate CCR's impact to encourage student engagement; suggested incentives (e.g., pizza).
- Wadham MCR: SU could engage more with JCR/MCR Presidents and better explain CCR's purpose.
- Kellogg MCR: New president unaware of CCR due to communications still going to previous president; handovers should include updating SU contacts.
- Wolfson MCR: Reported ongoing issues with CCR voting.
- Lincoln MCR: Requested communications go to role emails rather than personal accounts; noted CCR discussions are now more conversational, but changes should be better communicated.
- Student: Positive feedback on the discussion space; suggested recognition of engaged common rooms via impact reports and setting clearer participation expectations.
- St Anne's JCR: Echoed concerns about engagement and will take feedback into account in upcoming role.
- SP: The SU will be reviewing feedback when evaluating the CCR Pilot.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 12th May (Week 3), 18:00-20:00, location (same): Lecture Theatre, H B Allen Centre.