

Council Minutes

1st week Michaelmas term 2013

1st Week Council held on Wednesday 16th October 2013 at 5.30pm in Pichette Auditorium, Pembroke.

If you have any questions about OUSU Council, you should feel free to contact the President, Tom Rutland at president@ousu.org

- a. Members of OUSU Paid Staff Asked to Speak to Council
- b. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- c. Matters Arising from the Minutes
- d. Ratifications in Council
- e. Elections in Council
- f. Reports from the Sabbatical Officers
- g. Reports from the Executive Officers who wish to make reports
- h. Questions to Members of the Executive
- i. Passage of Motions Nem Con
- j. Motions of No Confidence or Censure
- k. Other Motions
 1. Elections Procedures
 2. Complaints Committee
 3. Response to the Vice Chancellor's comments on tuition fees
- l. Any Other Business

a. Members of OUSU Paid Staff Asked to Speak to Council

The Chair asked Council if there would be any issue in hearing a brief introduction from the paid staff at OUSU. There was no objection from Council. Brona O'Toole the CEO of OUSU was invited to speak followed by Cate Hemmingway, Student Advisor.

Brona O'Toole, Chief Executive of OUSU

Told Council that it was a good opportunity to show staff faces. Brona told Council that she was happy to any questions whenever they might arise. She can be contacted via email on chiefexecutive@ousu.org. Brona told Council that her main job was to run OUSU as an organization on behalf of the trustee board. Brona runs the day-to-day management of OUSU. She oversees the OUSU budget and strategy with the President and ended by saying how great it was to see everyone at Council.

Cate Hemmingway, Student Advisor

Said she was here to answer any questions and queries that students had at Oxford and invited members of Council to put their friends in touch with the student advice service. Cate and her colleague, Lisa Stokes-King, can be contacted at advice@ousu.org

b. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

There were no issues raised with the minutes.

c. Matters Arising from the Minutes

None

d. Ratifications in Council

None

e. Elections in Council

The following positions will be elected in OUSU Council of 1st Week.

Before hustings were called the RO, Nick Cooper, explained that he would delegate responsibility for counting the JS(EC)SM committee result to the President, Tom Rutland, as Nick Cooper was standing for a position.

2 Positions for the JS (EC) SM Committee - The committee is key to the relationship between OUSU and the university. The other members of the committee are 3 sabbatical officers, 1 member of the executive and the CEO. A hust was called and the three candidates delivered their husts individually. They were invited to give one-minute husts.

Jane Cahill (Queens College)

Thanked Council for the invitation to speak. She was attracted to the position as it had a good name. She has sat on the OUSU trustee board and is interested to see how it develops. She wanted to be able to stress to the university how much work OUSU does, to stress the importance of its finances and to stress its independence.

Nick Cooper (St John's)

Has sat on the committee for the last eight months and wished to provide continuity. He thought it was an important committee and thought that funding was important. Nick handled election regulations and was RO so wanted to make clarifications to the committee.

Jack Matthews (University College)

Wanted to make sure OUSU was following legal procedure and has already served for two years. Jack dealt with governance and academic affairs. He said that he had experience and wanted to see students represented. He wanted to see more in the way of departmental representation.

Raj Dattani (St Peter's)

Asked how long the positions lasted for. The response was that they would last one year.

Jane Cahill (Queens College) was elected.

Jack Matthews (University College) was elected.

1 Position for the Deputy Returning Officer - There was one candidate so no hust was required.

Wharton Chan (Pembroke) was elected.

f. Reports from the Sabbatical Officers

In order of presentation:

President - Tom Rutland

Explained that he had just graduated in PPE. He said that his report was contained in the yellow document. Tom said that tackling funding had been one of his main pledges and he said that he had set up meetings with the university. Things were looking positive and he said he would update Council when

he knew more. He mentioned the guide to careers, which gave students an idea of what they might want to do after university as well as informing students about the societies on offer at the university. Tom told Council that the third most visited page on the website was the naked calendar. He said he had been working with a number of people to get the elections pack sorted and that an advert for the elections would be placed in JCR pigeonholes. Tom said that Fresher's Fair had been a success with 450 societies and lots of OUSU branding to raise OUSU's profile. Tom has been around lots of JCRs along with the rest of the sabbatical team. Two new student trustees had been put in place over the Summer through co-option. This, he said was unfortunate and the quinquennial review would look into making sure trustees were elected in future, rather than co-opted in.

VP Access - Rachel Pickering

Has recently had an article in the Cherwell on back to school week. She said that back to school week was trending on twitter under the hashtag '#gobackgiveback'. She encouraged members of Council to be role models for schools and said that Oxford University had the most students signed up to Future First than any other university in the country. There is a new bursary package. Target Schools means current students can be shadowed throughout Michaelmas and Hilary terms.

VP Welfare - Charlotte Hendy

Noted how successful Fresher's Fair had been for the CRAE and LGBT campaigns. She encouraged Council to email her or the chairs of the campaigns to get involved. She encouraged students to use the Student Advice Service. There is a Freshers video Charlotte made which can be viewed on Youtube and encouraged members to follow her on Twitter,

VP Women - Sarah Pine

Said she had written a long report so would keep her verbal report short. She said that WomCam had been successful on Monday where 100 people had attended. She congratulated the organisers on such a well-organized event. She said she would be in touch with Common Room Liaison Officers to make sure her campaigns meet as many people as possible.

VP Graduates - Garlen Lo

Talked about graduate funding. He said that the university had successfully bid for £3m of the HEFCE funding pot. Garlen was writing to the NUS about funding. Academic representation at the university had driven the QAA review and he said that he was working with departments to put any recommendations through. Garlen said he was working on building the relationships between MCRs and OUSU. He suggested at present that MCR presidents don't know much about OUSU.

VP Charities - Dan Tomlinson

Said it was good to be there and told Council that he would give them five facts. He said that 616 tickets for the ragball had been sold so far. There had been 300 sign ups for the living wage. The university was now paying the living wage to direct employees and should do to indirect employees. Dan said that lots of money had been raised through the rag raid buckets. OUSU have sold 38 bike locks so far and they are £15 each. Dan told council to follow him on twitter.

g. Reports from the Executive Officers who wish to make reports

No Oral Reports

h. Questions to Members of the Executive

Harry Burt (Trinity)

Thanked staff for coming in. Thanked the President in particular for his written and vocal report. He stressed the importance of better communications and asked for an update on OUSU hiring a Communications Officer. The President responded that a Web Editor and an Events and Operations manager had been appointed and that a Communications officer would be appointed in the next couple of weeks.

Raj Dattani (St Peter's)

Asked what the block grant from the university to OUSU was. The response from the chief executive was that this is £397,000 with an £100,000 uplift this year temporarily. Brona O'Toole, the chief executive, said that OSSL, the trading arm of OUSU, raised £250,000. OUSU does not make a profit and all money raised from OSSL goes back directly into the student union. OUSU runs a break-even budget. OSSL does not take money from students. Council was urged to send any questions it may have to the chief executive.

Charlotte Baker (St Catherine's)

Urged the sabbatical officers to use less jargon such as HEFCE and QAA as this made Council less accessible to new members.

Jack Matthews (University College)

Asked why some of the executives have not submitted a report. The Academic Affairs Campaign Officer, Anya Metzger responded that she had met with Rachel Pickering as well as with the Bodleian library and faculty leaders. She has been finding out more about academic feedback and online lectures. She said that there would be a publicity campaign for online lectures.

i. Passage of Motions Nem Con

None

j. Motions of No Confidence or Censure

None

k. Other Motions

1. ELECTION PROCEDURES

Council Notes:

1. That the OUSU Election Regulations require the production of a Nominations Pack, and that the Elections Committee consider the Nominations Pack they have produced and distributed by email and in Council to meet the requirements of Election Regulation 6.3.
2. That Junior Tribunal is a body which is crucial to operation of OUSU's direct elections.
3. That the Election Regulations require the procedure for selecting members of Junior Tribunal (Regulation 10.1b) and the voting system (Regulation 32.2) to be approved by Council.
4. That the voting system must provide for:
 - a. a secret ballot;
 - b. a person entitled to vote, being able to vote only once;
 - c. a person entitled to vote, to abstain;
 - d. electronic counting;
 - e. restricting voting to women and/or graduates as appropriate;
 - f. system access to be restricted to persons authorised by the Returning Officer;
 - g. system access, by a person entitled to vote, to a relevant manifesto and list of disclosures.

Council Believes:

1. That the procedure proposed for selecting Junior Tribunal members in MT12 worked well.
2. That the Mi-Voice voting system meets all the requirements set out in Notes 4 and has worked well in previous elections.

Council Resolves:

1. To approve the proposed procedure for selecting Junior Tribunal members for all Direct Elections (Appendix 1).
2. To approve the list of members of Junior Tribunal for this Academic Year (Appendix 2).
3. To approve the Mi-Voice electronic voting system for OUSU's Direct Elections.

Proposed by: *Nick Cooper (St John's)*

Seconded by: *Tom Rutland (Jesus)*

Returning Officer - Nick Cooper

Told Council he would be in charge of elections in 6th week as well as the elections of the trustees in January. He said that an email would be sent once freshers emails had been received from the university. Nick said that the motion was based on election regulations to ensure a fair election. The new nominations pack, which was distributed with the agenda, was based on last years pack. Nick said to email him with any questions at ro@ousu.org. The nominations pack contains a nomination form and how you go about nominating candidates, Nominations open on Thursday of 3rd week and close midday Thursday 4th week. Nick said that he was asking Council to agree to the voting system and the use of 'myvoice' an online voting platform. Nick also introduced the system of a junior tribunal, which was how complaints would be handled. If a complainant disagrees with the judgment of the RO then the complaint would be taken to a panel of ex OUSU sabbatical officers. Appendices 1 and 2 tell students how this would be achieved. Nick encouraged Council to pass the motion.

There were no questions or opposition speeches.

The motion was passed.

2. COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

Council Notes that:

1. A new Complaints Procedure has been drafted for the handling of complaints under section 22(2)(m) of the Education Act 1994 and Article 39.3.12. These are complaints any student may have about OUSU.
2. The new Complaints Procedure will not cover complaints about
 - elections and referenda,
 - the Student Advice Service, media and other financially supported services, or
 - OUSU employees.
3. The new Complaints Procedure will take effect on its publication by the new Trustee Board Complaints Committee¹.
4. Membership of the Board's Complaints Committee is five Student Members and the four External Trustees, and that Council is required to elect the five Student Members.
5. That complaints will no longer be handled by Council's Standing Committee, and that Council's Complaints Board / Committee² is now redundant (relevant Standing Orders will be repealed later this Term).

Council Believes:

¹ Once Council has elected the 5 student members, and the Committee has met, it can properly consult the Board / University on the draft Complaints Procedure (a formality), and then publish the Procedure. Publication should only happen when the Committee is open for business.

² There is some confusion in SOs as to whether the Complaints Board and Complaints Committee are the same body.

1. The time is now right to elect the five Student Members to the Board's Complaints Committee.
2. That Council's Complaints Board / Committee should be formally abolished.

Council therefore Resolves:

1. To call an Election in Council for the five vacancies in 3rd Week Council.
2. To abolish Council's Complaints Board / Committee with immediate effect.

Proposed by: Tom Rutland, Jesus
Seconded by: Sarah Pine, Wadham

Amendment One

To be read in conjunction with Appendix 3

To Replace Council Notes 5 with;

5. That complaints will no longer be handled by Council's Standing Committee, and that Council's Complaints Board / Committee³ will soon be redundant. This requires Council to repeal relevant sections of the old Governing Documents, as set out in Bye Law 2.3.

To add Council Believes;

3. That OUSU is legally obliged to have a complaints process, and therefore a smooth transition must be coordinated, from the old system to the new, to allow for continuity of provision.

To Remove 'Council Therefore Resolves 1 and 2', and replace with;

Council Resolves;

1. To call for an Election in Council for the five vacancies on the new Complaints Committee, in 3rd Week Council Michaelmas Term 2013.
2. That the current Complaints Committee/Board shall be abolished as soon as 2 Student Members have been elected to the new committee (The Quorum for the new Complaints Committee, as defined in the Complaints Procedure C7, is 2 Student Members and 1 External Trustee).
3. To mandate the new Complaints Committee, and the current Chair of Complaints Committee/Board to meet as soon as possible following the new elections, to allow for a smooth transition.
4. To repeal the following Rules;
 - a. Rule J 1.1 d)⁴
5. To repeal the following Standing Orders;
 - a. Standing Order G 8.5²
 - b. Standing Order I 3²
 - c. Standing Order K²
6. To repeal the Complaints Board Regulations, titled 'Report 1 - Regulations'² passed in 7th Week Hilary Term 2008
7. That the repeal of the Rules, Standing Orders, and Regulations named in Council Resolves 4,5 and 6 above shall take effect upon the successful election of 2 Student Members to the new Complaints Committee.

Proposed: Jack Matthews, University College
Seconded: Nicholas Cooper, St. John's College

President - Tom Rutland

Informed Council that Council has a complaints committee, which a student can use if a student has a complaint against OUSU. This was being changed. He invited Jack Matthews to speak on the amendment, which he accepted as friendly.

³ There is some confusion in SOs as to whether the Complaints Board and Complaints Committee are the same body.

⁴ See Appendix 3 for text of these Rules, Standing Orders and Complaints Board Regulations

Jack Matthews (University College)

Started by telling Council that according to the Education Act 1994, Council has to have a complaints procedure. The amendment allowed the fluid transition to the new system, otherwise there would be a two-week blackout period. He proposed cleaning up the governing documents as well as the rules, regulations and standing orders. He told Council that this way they would not break the law.

There was no opposition.

The motion was passed.

3. RESPONSE TO THE VICE-CHANCELLORS COMMENTS ON TUITION FEES

OUSU Council Notes:

- 1) That the Vice-Chancellor, in his Annual Oration on 08/10/13, spoke extensively about the funding of undergraduate education and concluded that ‘a system of tuition charges more closely related to the true cost of the education provided... is something that I believe in the longer run will have to be considered.’
- 2) That the Vice-Chancellor in the same speech declared the ‘real cost of an Oxford education’ to be ‘at least £16,000 per undergraduate every year’.
- 3) That the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government trebled the undergraduate tuition fee cap in 2010 to £9000, and significantly cut university teaching budgets.
- 4) That the UK currently spends 1.3% of GDP on higher education, which is less than the OECD average of 1.6%.
- 5) That England has the highest undergraduate tuition fees for public universities in the world.
- 6) That the University of Oxford currently charges £9000 a year for its undergraduate courses.

OUSU Council Believes:

- 1) That higher education is a public good that receives inadequate levels of public funding.
- 2) That this government has undertaken an ideological assault on the public funding of higher education and made damaging cuts to the higher education sector.
- 3) That the Vice-Chancellor should be focusing on defending the University of Oxford and the higher education sector from further government cuts and lobbying for more public funding, rather than lobbying for the ability to charge undergraduate students more through the removal or relaxing of the current tuition fee cap.
- 4) That higher education and its funding is a vital issue that must be on the agenda at the next general election, but that Universities and students together should be making the case for increased public funding as opposed to increased student fees.
- 5) That the full effects of the introduction of £9000 fees on access to Oxford and the wider higher education sector is not yet known, and will take several years to become clear.
- 6) That talk of raising undergraduate fees up to £16,000 a year risks damaging the vital access work undertaken both by the University, OUSU, and Oxford students at large.

OUSU Council Resolves:

- 1) To oppose and condemn the Vice-Chancellor’s suggestion that undergraduate tuition fees should further increase, to oppose further government cuts to higher education and to call for greater public funding of higher education.
- 2) To mandate the OUSU President to write to the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of all Oxford students, expressing:
 - a. The student body’s opposition to higher tuition fees and further cuts to higher education
 - b. Students’ concerns about the access implications of suggesting fee levels of up to £16,000 a year
 - c. The need for university management to stand with their students demanding great public funding for higher education, and opposing greater tuition fee charges.

- 3) To mandate the OUSU President to make all students aware of the Vice-Chancellor's comments and OUSU's opposition to them, and to relay the Vice-Chancellor's response to all students.
- 4) To encourage Common Rooms to pass motions:
 - a. condemning the Vice-Chancellor's comments encouraging higher tuition fee charges
 - b. opposing further government cuts to higher education and calling for greater public funding of higher education.

Proposed by: Tom Rutland, Jesus
Seconded by: Tyler Alabanza-Behard, Christ Church

President - Tom Rutland

Told Council that he did not expect to deal with tuition fees so soon into his term of office. He told Council that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education has written to the Times and the Times Ireland reinforcing the Vice-Chancellor's (VC) message. Tom said that the UK government spends only 1.6% of its budget on higher education fees, which compares negatively with countries in the OECD. He suggested that it is the government, which should spend more on higher education, rather than the individual student. Tom said that OUSU was not alone in its quest to keep student fees as low as possible - he said there was support from academics and there was access work going on with Target Schools. The Principal of Hertford College has expressed concerns and Nick Clegg has shown his support. Tom said that he welcomed the VC's attempt to begin a conversation on HE funding, but said OUSU should stand up for students and oppose higher fees.

Jack Matthews (University College)

Ask the President if he had spoken with the VC. The President responded that he had spoken to him last week but it had been a busy Freshers Week. Tom said that he wanted to consult more with students before he had more formal discussions with the VC.

Ashley Ainsley (St Catherine's)

Asked how many JCRs support the motion. The president suggested that most JCRs supported the motion although St Hugh's voted against it.

Charlotte Baker (St Catherine's)

Suggested the wording of the motion was inflammatory. She said that not every college has had their first meeting back as it was not practical to do so. Charlotte suggested she would like more time to consult members and felt she had no mandate to vote.

President - Tom Rutland

Said that the motion was not meant to be dictatorial. Said that he would go back and discuss with commons rooms about the wording of the motion but could not see anything offensive. He said that it was important to start the conversation now. There was time pressure for a quick and robust response.

Harry Burt (Trinity)

Suggested that the wording was inflammatory and ideological although he said he agreed with the general thrust of the motion. He said he did not agree with the retrospective feel of the motion e.g. note 3 and 'OUSU Council believes - 2 and 5'.

President - Tom Rutland

Suggested that 'notes' offered a factual background and the 'believes' section was his view. He said that he welcomed any amendments. 5 was a 'believe' as he did not know what the impact of fees would be as it was too early to tell.

Jack Matthews (University College)

Said that there was overly strong language in the motion although the fact that he was Conservative was not the reason for his disagreement. He said he was worried by how OUSU would be seen in the eyes of students. Jack said that people would read the motion and perceive that there was a political agenda. He said this was a knee jerk reaction to the VC. Jack suggested taking more time and come up with reason and argument. He suggested looking at the wins of OUSU which had relied on well thought

through arguments with data presented to the university. Jack said it was good the debate had started. Urged Council to oppose the motion.

Alex Bartram (Balliol)

Suggested that those JCRs who have not had time to vote on the motion could vote on an amendment. He said that it was a really good motion. Said that it generated discussions.

There was a point of order to push back a decision on the motion to 3rd week. The point of order fell on a vote.

Robert Jeffries (Merton)

Said that it was difficult to vote against the motion because council would then look like they support the rise in fees.

Nathan Akehurst (Lincoln)

VC made two clear points that fees should match the Oxford education cost. He said that he had not heard much in the way of substance. Said that at the Access conferences he has been too that the majority of people's worries about university centre around whether they would be able to afford it. Even though Oxford is the best for low-income families due to the generous bursaries available. There needed to be a discussion on how to move forward.

Christian Ruckteschler (Merton)

Warned against marketisation, which the VC seems to support. Suggested that Council should be against this. Education should not be for financial purposes as students were there to learn and not get a top job at the end of it as a city banker. The market structuring of education should be removed. He asked what is there to stop Oxford fees rising ever higher due to the demand that exists for an Oxford education. Christopher suggested liaising with Oxford academics who may also support a similar motion.

James Blythe (Brasenose)

Suggested there was a lot of media interest. He said that there needs to be a voice in the media that encourages future students of Oxford - not one that turns people away. They needed to show that they cared about future Oxford Students. He said that Council should support the motion.

Anya Metzger (Wadham)

She said she had taken this to her JCR who had widely condemned an increase in funding. She suggested contacting the Academic Policy Committees of colleges where most academics, she thought, would be against marketization. She said that the VC's background in American universities shone through in his oration.

Jane Cahill (Queen's College)

Did not think that the language of the motion was too strong. Suggested that there was not student consultation in the VC's oration. Said she would support the motion.

An amendment was brought by Harry Burt. This made allocations to strike notes 3, as well as points 2 and 5.

Harry Burt (Trinity)

Urged Council not to vote on issues that had already happened in order to send a clearer message.

Robert Greig (Magdalen)

Seconding the amendment, said that his college was not close to OUSU. Both left and right of political spectrum do not want higher fees. He said that OUSU should not take ideological stance as it does not help the image of OUSU. He wanted a more universal motion.

President - Tom Rutland

Said he would oppose the amendment. He said that it was relevant to include the recent debate. Tom said that there had been an ideological assault on funding for university students. He said that at Fresher's Fair he kept hearing that OUSU was irrelevant and said that it will be even more irrelevant if it

did not take a stand against the VC's comments on fees.

A vote was held on the amendment. The amendment fell

Council agreed to vote on the motion.

President - Tom Rutland

Said that at present there was an inaccurate reputation of OUSU and that a stand needed to be taken. He said that university needed to be safeguarded for future students. He wanted support for starting the conversation.

Jack Matthews (University College)

Suggested that the reputation of OUSU would not plummet if the motion was not passed. He said however the vote turns out, the debate should continue. He said that Council should not be naysayers. He reiterated that he opposed the motion.

The motion passes.

Voting:

Yes - 72

No - 2

Abstention - 9

I. Any Other Business

None