

Aberdeen University Students' Association
Minutes of General Meeting 06/03/2019
6pm at New King's 6

Agenda Item		Action
1	<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>The Chair Dariya Koleva (DK) welcomed everyone to the meeting. DK said that the General Meeting has met quorum but only just, and encouraged people to stay. DK ensured the GM that we will aim to use the time as efficiently as possible.</p> <p>Meeting began at 18:15.</p>	
2	<p>2. Housekeeping</p> <p>DK moved onto housekeeping.</p> <p>DK clarified that the AUSA Safe Space is in place, so no slurs or offensive language will be tolerated. No fire alarms are scheduled for this time. DK asked speakers to wait for microphones before speaking, and added that one can ask to speak by raising their hand and/or voting card. DK said that no breaks are scheduled during the meeting. For time efficiency reasons, DK asked the attendees not to repeat points and assured that she will take speeches as equally as possible, but due to time constraints not everyone will be able to speak. DK mentioned that Student Council rules apply to this meeting and asked speakers to state their name and any position every time they speak for minute taking purposes.</p> <p>DK said that due to her being on the Democratic review working group, she will not be able to chair the next item on the agenda. Since the Vice-Chair is not here, DK said a Chair for the next item needs to be elected from the floor. Harry Chalklin (HC) will present the Democratic review parts.</p>	
3	<p>3. Democratic review (presentation and vote)</p> <p>HC was asked by the Chair to present the summary of the presentation, originally presented by NUS consultant Kathryn Sullivan. A student, Nick Di Piazza (NDP), volunteered to chair this part of the meeting. DK asked the GM to vote to approve NDP as Chair, which was approved by an overwhelming majority, no abstentions or no votes.</p> <p>HC said that the presentation he is about to give was originally presented by Kathryn Sullivan, and as it is her piece of work, HC will not be able to comment on the data nor the survey methods. HC clarified that there are three sections to vote on. HC emphasised that that this is not the final version of the proposed changes, but rather the idea. HC said that the GM is voting to approve the general idea behind these changes and task the Trustee board to act on them.</p> <p>HC explained the first part the GM would be voting on. HC explained that the new proposed form of Student Council is much smaller, with heavier inclusion of the liberation and section forums. Decision making would also be more accessible to all students via online decision-making (possibly an app) and referenda. NDP asked if there were any questions, none were presented.</p>	<p>3. Action point:</p> <p>Democratic review approved.</p>

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The Chair called for a vote on the first part. Votes divided 98 yes, 16 against and 14 abstain. The first part passed.

HC explained that in the second part, the number of Sabbatical Officers is not suggested to change, but their remits modified slightly. HC said that the survey suggests that the workload amongst Sabbs is uneven, and that the suggested names are not final. HC described the new Sabb role remits and highlighted that as nominations are already open, these changes in roles would come into place for the 2020-2021 Sabbs.

The Chair asked if there were any questions. Isla Scott (IS) asked whether in the new remit there would be overlap between societies and sports. IS also raised the issue of Roombookings. HC said these roles will still be separate and that roombooking is mostly handled by university.

A student asked if the new Communities role would get societies and RAG included as well. HC said the new remit will take a little bit from both Communities and Welfare.

Lawson Ogubie (LO) also added that a structure of support staff is already exists to assist the new positions.

Cecilia Wallbäck (CW) asked when the role changes would be implemented, as nominations for the next Sabbs has closed already.

Lina Nass (LN) said these will come into place for 2020-2021 Sabbatical team, as nominations had to open after the AGM.

No further questions were asked. The Chair called for a vote. Votes divided 101 yes, 26 no, 12 abstain. This part passes.

HC introduced the third part of the review. HC explained that this part asks the new Student Council and Trustee board to make any necessary byelaw amendments and find the appropriate language to implement these changes. HC said this part gives the Student Council and Trustee board power to do so.

Borys Biedron (BB) requested that for future meetings, Trustee Board should make sure any relevant reading documents are made available to the student body in sufficient time. HC responded yes.

Anttoni Numminen (AN) said that the Trustee board has transparency problems and asked how students can make sure the Trustee board will not make decisions by themselves or overturn Student Council decisions?

HC responded by stating that the Trustee board's job is to make sure AUSA follows its constitution and the law, and that no policies will be overturned unless they seriously contradict the constitution or the law.

BB asked if there will be a referendum to approve the final form of the democratic review. HC said yes. BB asked if the referendum was rejected, would the issue be revisited. HC said yes, in principle, but the democratic review will not be rejected as democratic processes will continuously be revisited.

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	<p>The Chair called for a vote. Votes divided 109 yes, 10 no, 22 abstain. The democratic review passes.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>4. Motions</p> <p>Dariya Koleva (DK) resumed as chair. DK explained how motions are discussed; students need to introduce themselves when speaking. DK said that if the proposer of a motion is not present, someone from the floor can introduce it, followed by speeches for and against. DK explained what percentage of yes votes needed for each motion.</p> <p>4.1 Motion for Palestinian Solidarity and to Support BDS</p> <p>DK said this motion has received an amendment. DK said the proposer has suggested one amendment and someone else has done so as well.</p> <p>The proposer of the original motion and the amendment was asked to introduce the motion. Alba Utrera Roman (AUR) waved her right to speak to another representative. A representative of the Palestine society motion explained, that the aims to ask AUSA to lobby University to show solidarity for Palestine and cut ties with businesses that support the Israeli army or Israeli companies that support the army.</p> <p>The Chair asked the proposer of the other amendment to speak. The President of the Jewish society Raquel Cohanin (RC) said that Jewish students have concerns over this motion, and the amendments seek to address these. RC said that the Jewish society has connections with Israel and the society is concerned over the implications and the effects this motion would have on the Jewish students on campus.</p> <p>DK asked the students to vote on the version they would like to hear. The Chair called for a vote. The amended version by the Jewish society was chosen with an overwhelming majority. AUR commented that their amendment was made after the Jewish and Palestine societies had met, and that the further amendment nullifies the original motion's sentiment.</p> <p>The Chair opened the debate. A member of the Jewish Society said that whilst the Jewish society acknowledges the Palestinian struggle, the society is against the motion as BDS is a destructive force and supporting a one-sided boycott does not help build peace. The representative argued that the boycott would shut down dialogue between the two sides and encouraged students to vote against the motion.</p> <p>A member of AUMSA spoke for the motion, stating that students should support this motion as statistic and facts speak for themselves.</p>	<p>4. Action point:</p> <p>4.1 Motion amended by the Jewish society passes.</p> <p>Motions 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 do not pass.</p>

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Marc Serpik (MS) spoke against the motion. MS states that the state of Israel is a part of the Jewish identity, adding that this motion and BDS goes beyond just boycott. MS argued that this motion will make students feel unwelcome, as kosher food will then be boycotted as well. MS argued that the motion is illegal.

A member of the Palestine society spoke for the motion. They argued that BDS only targets the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, not people of Jewish origin or Jewish institutions.

The Chair asked the proposer to summarise the motion. A representative of the Palestine society stated that AUSA as an organisation should show solidarity to Palestinian people and human rights.

The Chair moved the meeting to a vote. Votes divided 76 yes, 40 no, 26 abstain. The amended version of the motion passes.

The president of the Palestine society said they are glad that the motion passed with amendments and they hope the result can make more people happier, adding that the society is ready to discuss things with the Jewish society and apologise for any distress caused.

4.2 Byelaw 7 (9) ii amendment

Derek Gardiner (DG) was asked to present the motion. DG said that the motion aims to lower the amount of members needed for a group to affiliate as a society. DG argued that some groups have been forced to disaffiliate as the society could not meet the required amount of members. DG clarified that the current number is 10 members and the byelaw amendment would lower it to 5.

Andrew Easton (AE) spoke against the motion. AE argued that most student associations require 10 members or more and that Aberdeen has a very low requirement. AE said there are processes in place where societies are not automatically disaffiliated and the higher number differentiates between a group of friends and a society.

LN proposed a procedural motion to move the meeting straight to a vote, which was seconded by other students. The Chair called for a vote on the procedural motion, which passed with an overwhelming majority.

The Chair called for a vote on the motion, which needed 75% support to pass. Votes divided 46 yes, 63 no and 11 abstain. Motion does not pass.

4.3 Referendum Motion

The proposer was asked to introduce the motion. DG said that according to AUSA byelaws, there should have been a referendum on AUSA's NUS (National Union of Students) membership every 4 years, which has not taken place accordingly. DG argued that the byelaw should be upheld and a referendum organised at the same time with the upcoming Sabb elections.

A student spoke against the motion. They argued that if a referendum was organised now, there would not be enough time for students to consider both sides of the argument. LN, as the Chair of the Elections committee, made a point of clarification, and agreed that it would be impossible to organise one now. LN suggested a procedural motion to move straight to a vote which was seconded by other students.

The proposer DG said he could amend the motion to have the referendum in September 2019. The Chair clarified that once a procedural motion has been seconded, the meeting must move straight to a vote and no further amendments can be made. The Chair called for a vote. Votes divided 91 yes, 20 against, 5 abstain. The procedural motion passes. The meeting moved to a vote on the actual motion. The votes divided 16 yes, 63 no and 34 abstain. The motion does not pass.

4.4 Neutrality on Abortion

The proposer, DG, was asked to introduce the motion. DG argued that the motion aims to repeal the current AUSA pro-choice policy, as AUSA should not take sides on this issue. DG said that due to the current policy, the Life Ethics group was not allowed to affiliate as a society, which infringes on freedom of speech.

Thomas Byam Shaw (TBS) suggested a procedural motion to move the meeting straight to a vote, which was seconded. The Chair called for a vote. The procedural motion does not pass.

Julie Claustre (JC) asked the proposer to define neutrality as pro-choice is neutral. JC asked why the majority of seconders on the motion are men.

Alex Mason (AM), a representative of the Life Ethics group, replied that the original pro-choice policy prohibits the display of pro-life material which makes it not neutral. AM also argued that people should not make assumptions about the seconders' gender.

Jasmine Paneva (JP) spoke against the motion. JP argued that whilst abortion might not affect everyone, the pro-life content might put students at risk who are going through this situation and struggle with mental health.

A representative of the Life Ethics group spoke for the motion, clarifying that any harassment from the group would not be tolerated, further arguing that the pro-life VS pro-choice is not the only debate that has the risk to affect students.

A student spoke against the motion, and asked if the group can still organise events, why the group needs to have a platform?

DG made a point of clarification by stating that the group is not allowed to book rooms as the Life Ethics group is no an affiliated society.

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	<p>AM spoke in favour of the motion, stating that students should be allowed to hold their own views and the group should be allowed to affiliate.</p> <p>Luke Stronach (LS) spoke against the motion, arguing that the supporters of the motion hold misogynistic views which would explain their support for the motion. DG responded by saying that these are false allegations.</p> <p>The Chair called for a vote. Votes divided 16 yes, 63 no and 34 abstain. The motion does not pass.</p>	
5	<p>5. Closing message</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for coming. LN promoted the upcoming Sabb elections, and mentioned that there will be voting incentives.</p>	