

Democratic Review Update – October 2019

There are three key strands to this work at present:

1. AUSA's Constitution

AUSA will have to reflect the changes voted for in an updated constitution. The strongest recommendation which was made was for the Association to strongly consider moving away from the current unincorporated charitable status. This is currently being looked at by the AUSA Trustee Board who will investigate the options open to AUSA to take forward this recommendation appropriately.

There were several further recommendations which will need to be reflected in the constitution. These include:

- a. The removal of the Executive Committee which was highlighted as redundant.
- b. The adjustment of the role of Student Council to give Student Council the fundamental role of ensuring the development and implementation of Students' Association Policy based on student input.
- c. There were also changes suggested to ensure consistency around the removal of Trustees.
- d. There are other minor updates being made to tidy up some language and adjust some outdated references.

There are three recommendations which were made which were made which the Sabbatical team felt were not appropriate for our campus and will be recommending that Student Council and the Trustee Board do not take forward. These are:

- a. Decision making at board level be unanimous – it was felt that this would hand a veto to each Board member and restrict the ability of the board to take decisions effectively. The reality is that most of what is done at Board level is done unanimously however we feel that it is vital to allow the opportunity for healthy debate and a vote where necessary much like we do at Student Council.
- b. Second place candidate take up post for Sabbatical Officer Elections – we feel that this would not necessarily be appropriate for our campus given the practical as well as the democratic issues this may cause.
- c. Moving the start date of Sabbs to August 1st – We feel that this would be detrimental to attracting candidates and for successful candidates. At present, there is already a wait of three months or so.

An updated constitution, once agreed by Student Council and the Trustee Board, will require additional sign off from the University Court before being implemented.

2. AUSA's Byelaws

We are also working on presenting for approval an updated set of AUSA Byelaws. These will need to reflect several things:

- a. We will be updating the Sabbatical Officer structure for the elections next March which will be implemented as voted for by students at the GM. The next set of Sabbatical Officers will take up the new roles when they start in July 2020.

- b. We will be working to make the language in our Byelaws simpler and more accessible – these can often be very technical and traditional language which could be off-putting to someone who wants to interact with this document.
- c. We will also be looking to finalise the new makeup of Student Council. Like the new Sabbatical Officer roles, this will be implemented in the next set of elections however the current council could assume the new role if agreed.
- d. We have also been investigating a new model of Sabbatical Officer scrutiny and have identified some best practice which we hope to implement. This will be taken forward as a new byelaw and presented to Student Council and Trustees for consideration.
- e. We will also propose a new policy process to get more students involved in the creation of policy on our campus. We hope by opening this process to all students that we can begin to reflect better the policies our students want to see incorporating better use of technology.

3. Ancillary work

There were also a range of principals for change which we have looked to reflect immediately. These are mainly operational aspects such as updating training for elected reps, better communications around elections, better monitoring of the diversity of our reps, more blogs and vlogs from Sabbatical Officers, better sharing of Student Council meeting papers, and looking at a new mobile app which can include decision making tools for students. This is just a flavour of the additional work ongoing and improvements that have already been made since the Democratic Review was presented and approved at the GM.

That is just a brief update and reflects some of the work which has been done so far and the direction of travel from now on. If you have any questions, or wish to let us know what you think, please don't hesitate to contact Cecilia at studentpresident@abdn.ac.uk.