

## QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST STUDENTS' UNION

### MINUTES

Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council  
held on 12 November 2019 in Stormont Parliament Buildings.

#### Present:

Adam McKenna	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Ahmad Merzah	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Aidan Moran	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Axelle Larue	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Charlotte Nolan-Browne	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Ciarán O'Brien	Executive Management Committee - VP Welfare
Collins Akor	Executive Management Committee - Postgraduate Research Officer
Connor Veighey	Executive Management Committee - Union President
Conor Loughran	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
David Griffith	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Doris Obialor	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Eden Baker	School Representative - School of Nursing & Midwifery (SNAM)
Ellen Fearon	Executive Management Committee - VP Student Activities
Elliot Beever	Executive Management Committee - LGBT+ Officer
Emily Bond	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Emma Quin	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Gift Sotonye-Frank	Executive Management Committee - VP Postgraduate
Grian Ní Dhaimhín	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Hamsavani Rajeswaren	Executive Management Committee - VP Equality & Diversity
Hannah Orr	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Holly Huddleston	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Jack Powell	School Representative - School of Biological Sciences (SBIO)
Jamie Waring	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Jan Carson	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Jason Bunting	Executive Management Committee - VP Education
Jessica Lawrence	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Katie McCleary	School Representative - Social Sciences, Education and Social Work (SSESW)
Kit Penlington	Executive Management Committee - Trans Students' Officer
Leah Rea	School Representative - School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics (SHAPP)
Liam Magill	Executive Management Committee - Environmental and Ethical Trading Officer
Mark Francos	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Mark Hamilton	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Matthew Kelly	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Michael Upham	School Representative - School of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering (SMAE)
Molly Liggett	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Nathan Horbury	Students' Union Council - All Student Representative
Neville Cobbe	School Representative - Institute of Theology (ITHEO)
Niall Pollard	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Olivia Fletcher	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Padraig Quinn	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Peter McMurray	Executive Management Committee - Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) Faculty Officer
Rebecca Holmes	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Rebecca Russell	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Ruairi McLarnon	School Representative - School of Arts, English and Languages (SAEL)
Samuel Holst	School Representative - School of Mathematics & Physics (SMP)
Sandisiwe Nyanda	Students' Union Council - International Student Representative (including INTO)
Sean-Diarmuid Kelliher	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Sophie Carlisle	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Sultan Abbas Shajahan Sait	Executive Management Committee - Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students' Officer
Tanys Insley	Students' Union Council - International Student Representative (including INTO)
Tiffany Gracias	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Adam McKenna	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Ahmad Merzah	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Aidan Moran	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)

#### In Attendance:

DAMIEN CORRIDAN (CLERK OF COUNCIL)  
KRISTINA CONNOLLY (DEPUTY CLERK OF COUNCIL)  
LOUISE MCGEOUGH (ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION ASSISTANT)  
ROBERT MURTAGH (NUS-USI PRESIDENT)  
MERAV AMIR (PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE UNION AT QUEEN'S)

The Council Speaker welcomed all attendees to the second Meeting of the 2019-10 of the Students' Union Council.

1. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from the following Councillors:

Adam McShane	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Aditya Ajit Sali	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Angela Rogan	Executive Management Committee - Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) Faculty Officer
Aodhán Ó'Baoill	Executive Management Committee - Irish Language Officer
Ashley Kane	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Bella Bella	School Representative - School of Chemistry & Chemical Engineering (SCHEM)
Calum Irvine	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Dyuti Das	School Representative - School of Pharmacy (SPMY)
Hayley Donnelly	School Representative - School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences (SMED)
Huda Al Baqali	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Jacob Kyle	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
John Ewing	Students' Union Council - All First Year Representative
Lauren Bailey	Executive Management Committee - Postgraduate Taught Officer

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

2.1 Statutory Meeting of 28 October 2019

It was agreed that the minutes of the Statutory Meeting of 28 Oct 2019 (SUC/M/19/5) were a true and accurate record of proceedings.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were none.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 Students' Union Bye-Elections and Conference Delegate Elections

Damien Corridan, Clerk of Council announced that over the coming weeks Bye-Elections would be taking place for the positions of:

Part-Time Disabled Students' Officer  
Part-Time International Students' Officer  
Part-Time Womens' Students' Officer

Conference Delegate Elections would be taking place for the following:

NUS Conference Delegates  
USI Conference Delegates  
NUS-USI Conference Delegates

Further information would be circulated.

4.2 Damien Corridan, Clerk of Council thanked Paula Bradshaw MLA for booking the room for tonight's meeting.

5. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS/RULES AMENDMENTS

There were none.

6. BUSINESS FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Recognition of Clubs & Societies

The President advised Council that the Standing Committee at its recent meeting, agreed that the following Clubs and Societies meet all Constitutional requirements necessary to recommend them to be considered for recognition by the Council:

- 6.1.1 Queen's University Belfast Aerial Fitness Club
- 6.1.2 Queen's University Belfast Consulting Society
- 6.1.3 Queen's University Belfast Feline Welfare Society
- 6.1.4 Queen's University Belfast Medical Student Mental Health Society ("Medics for Medics")
- 6.1.5 Queen's University Yoga and Care Corner Society

Following a show of voting cards, the recommendation to recognise the clubs and societies passed.

## 7. BUSINESS FOR DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Students' Union Redevelopment Project – Update

The Union President presented a brief overview of progress on the development to-date, including that work with designers had been taking place regarding the hording which will be erected around the building, and that detailed user sessions were being carried out.

### 7.2 Students' Union Strategic Plan 2020-25 – Update

The Union President stated that the Students' Union was currently running an all student survey in the month of November to gain student feedback to inform our five year Strategic Plan, which had been completed by over 2000 students in the first two weeks. He encourages Councillors to complete this and spread the word.

The Union President also mentioned that he had been holding focus groups with students, internal Queen's departments and external companies. He encourages Councillors to respond to his request regarding the session held for Student Councillors.

### 7.3 Students' Union Autonomy – Update

The Union President reported that he has carried out desk research, collating a number of Relationship Agreements which he will review. He will then draft a bespoke Relationship Agreement between the University and Students' Union which he will bring to Council for scrutiny early next semester.

### 7.4 UCU Strike

Merav Amir, President of the University and College Union at Queen's was invited to speak to Councillors. Merav stated that staff do not want to strike but as their pensions and working conditions have been affected they have been left with no choice.

She commended students and the Students' Union for their support in the last strike and explained that the University had conceded to their demands after the last strike, but now have receded and aren't supporting UCU in the same way when their pensions are being changed. Merav continued to say that the University is not engaging in discussions about pay, working conditions, precarious zero hours contracts, equality in the workplace, workload and gender pay gap. She stated that staff have lost 20% of their pay in the last 10 years. She also stated that staff are under immense stress with not enough time to meet with students or give adequate feedback.

## 8. BYE-ELECTIONS

- 8.1 Students' Union Standing Committee 3 Vacancies

Rebecca Holmes and Eden Baker were duly proposed and both deemed elected.

9. ELECTIONS

There were none.

10. MOTIONS

A motion to suspend standing orders for emergency motion on Supporting UCU Strike Action was submitted.

Hamsavani Rajeswaren, Student Officer Equality & Diversity explained why they were bringing this emergency motion to Council and that this could not have been submitted before the deadline and the strike occurs after the next council date.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to suspend standing orders was carried.

**Supporting UCU Strike Action**

Council notes:

1. The University and College Union (UCU) have balloted for strike action on two separate legal disputes, one on pensions and one on pay and working conditions.
2. 79% of UCU members who voted backed strike action in relation to pensions, 74% supported strike action in relation to pay, equality, casualisation and workloads.
3. Industrial action has been called for November 25th – December 4th 2019.
4. Locally, UCU at Queen's have confirmed their intention to join with 60 universities across the UK in the industrial action.
5. This follows strike action taken in 2018 which was initiated by proposed reforms to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension scheme, which UCU UK cost affected staff (both academic and non-academic) up to £200,000 over the course of their retirement.
6. These threats are likely to be most damaging to workers at the beginning of their careers, including PhD students, which will have devastating impact in future.

Council believes:

1. Staff should receive fair pay, pensions and working conditions.
2. Staff's working conditions are inseparable from students' learning conditions.
3. Students and staff should stand in solidarity, including the struggle for fair pay, pensions and working conditions.
4. Threats to staff pay, pensions and conditions are part of the same ideology of marketization that is to blame for rising tuition fees, rising costs of education and cuts to education.

Council mandates:

1. Members of the Executive Management Team to give public support to UCU in their struggle
2. To join the picket line during the 8 days in November and to encourage students to do the same
3. To lobby the University to oppose the proposed reforms in the USS and to improve staff pay and conditions

4. To meet, on a regular basis, with the executive of UCU at Queen's to discuss a joint strategy both in relation to this industrial action and in the future in relation to the wider issue of marketization.
5. To see that all possible provisions are made by the Union and the University to ensure that students face minimal adverse academic impact from the strike without compromising the principles of the strike, such as ensuring that students are not assessed on content covered during the eight days of strike action as far as possible

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)  
Secunder: Grian Ní Dhaimhín (Student)

Union President and Proposer, Connor Veighey moved the motion. He thanked Merav Amir, President of the University and College Union at Queen's for speaking to Council. He explained that staff are expected to pay more than they currently so while getting less out of pensions later on in life. He explains staff have experienced a cut in pay due to inflation while an increase in workload and stress. He stated that more staff are on zero hours contracts, which oftentimes may be beneficial to some students but not attractive to lecturers who have to support families. He further states that students have always stood with both workers and UCU.

Councillor [Postgrad Rep] Mark Francos spoke on the motion asking regarding the time limits on this motion/policy and the inconsistencies regarding the use of Executive Management Committee, Executive Management Board and Executive Management Team and recommends that this be made consistent throughout.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Grian Ní Dhaimhín spoke for the motion, stating that the Students' Union already has policies to support Student Staff Alliance. She states that the dignity of academic staff is vital to students and that their working conditions are students' learning conditions.

Councillor [School Rep] Neville Cobbe spoke on the motion querying representation across the University and what were to happen if a student were to strike and their lecturer isn't. He also states that the VC and PVCs see increases in their pay while other staffs' pay is reduced, and questions how we lobby against this.

Councillor [School Rep] Leah Rea spoke for the motion, calling for Councillors to stand for social justice and against the marketization and commercialisation of education. She stated that staff and students should stand together.

Councillor [MHLS Rep] David Griffith spoke on the motion, asking what the percentage was of the turnout?

Councillor [RPS Rep] Conor Loughran stated that it helps for Councillors to talk to fellow students about the strike, that it might be causing them stress and that they can give them more information.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Sean-Diarmuid Kelliher spoke for the motion and stated that the turnout doesn't necessarily reflect staffs real feelings, intimidation that staff may feel may reduce turnout.

Councillor [Postgrad Rep] Jamie Waring spoke for the motion stating that by the time he becomes a lecturer the conditions will be even worse, so to keep current students' futures in mind when Councillors vote on this motion.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Union President summates, apologises for inconsistency regarding Executive Management Committee and agrees that the fact that VC and PVCs consistently see increases in their pay while other staffs' pay is reduces, and he believes that this is something that the Students' Union could lobby against.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Molly Liggett makes a point that some lecturers feel that they have to strike and feel that they have to apologies to their students. She personally has 2 assignments due over the strike period and feel that they only people who are losing out of this is the students.

Union President explains that staff who are striking are losing money and pay over the strike and are only doing this because of their futures and the future of the University, and that they want to have this University be a place that your children and childrens' children would want to go to.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Union President and Proposer, Connor Veighey waived his right to summate.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

A motion to restore standing orders was carried.

## **10.1 Introduction of Postgraduate School Representatives**

Council Notes:

1. The number of postgraduate representatives on Council has increased from 13 to 20 this year.
2. PG students are still disproportionately underrepresented across the University.
3. PG students are one of the fastest growing student cohorts at QUB and they are significantly academically underrepresented, despite their diverse academic needs
4. Currently, the percentage of filled postgraduate Course Representative positions for
5. PGR and PGT programmes sits at 27% and 49% respectively, out of a total of about
6. 250 postgraduate representative positions that should be filled each year.
7. This year it has been agreed with the University that student representatives on the University's Postgraduate Forum are to be elected by the Students' Union, rather than nominated by Schools. This is, at best, a short-term measure and does not resolve the deficit in PG representation across campus.

Council Believes That:

1. There should be formal representation across the University, at School-level for PG students.
2. Postgraduate students should not be represented by undergraduate students in
3. SSCCs as they are unlikely to understand and effectively put forward the issues that affect postgraduate students.
4. SUC/A/19/6
5. Increasing elected postgraduate representation at all levels, including at school level, is necessary to ensure postgraduate engagement within the QUBSU as well as within their schools and Faculty.
6. School-level representation should be expanded to include one School Rep

7. (Undergraduate) and one School Rep (Postgraduate) for each School/Institute that offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
8. Both of these roles should be regarded as co-equal School Representatives, with the duties and responsibilities pertaining to their respective roles.

Council Resolves That:

1. The Vice President Postgraduate and Vice President Education shall lobby the
2. University to give recognition to these posts across the University by embedding these in the appropriate University Regulations / Guidelines.
3. The Students' Union shall bring forward appropriate amendments to the Constitution to enable the election of postgraduate School Representatives and to give them membership of the Students' Union Council and other relevant fora.
4. The Vice President Postgraduate and Vice President Education shall work with
5. Students' Union staff and the Graduate School to develop a model of training to support postgraduate academic representatives to fulfil their role effectively

Proposer: Gift Sotonye-Frank (Vice President Postgraduate)

Seconder: Jason Bunting (Vice President Education)

Student Officer Postgraduate and Proposer Gift Sotonye-Frank moved the motion. She states that creating this role creates representation within the Union and University, and with representation comes recognition. She explains that there are so many voices in the Postgraduate Community and that these voices often get lost. Postgraduate study is a completely different experience and the need the University to take more notice of them and their needs.

Councillor Jack Powell [Postgrad Rep] spoke against the motion, stating that there needs to be re-education between the Uni, the Schools. The Union and School Rep. He doesn't think that adding another position will help that and gain their respect.

Councillor Mark Francos [Postgrad Rep] spoke for the motion by stating that Jack raises a good point but that there are key differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students. He explains that having a voice for postgraduates is a good thing and that they can work alongside undergraduate reps. He further states that having more student reps can never be a bad thing.

Student Officer Education, Jason Bunting spoke for the motion by stating that the best person who can lead a postgraduate Forum is a postgraduate student. He states that in his previous role as School Rep he represented postgraduate students and he hadn't an insight into their issues. He further states that he takes Jack Powell's point on re-education.

Councillor [School Rep] Neville Cobbe spoke on the motion explaining that some students are current undergraduate students but have had previous experience at postgraduate level.

Councillor [School Rep] Leah Rea stated spoke on the motion stating that undergraduates wouldn't know the intricacies of postgraduate issues. She further states that the introduction of these Reps will mean that barriers and challenges will be erased.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Student Officer Postgraduate and Proposer Gift Sotonye-Frank summates by thanking Councillors for their responses. She states that it is not always the case that there are undergraduates elected as Reps that have postgraduate experience so it is better to have a separate role.

Following a show of voting cards, this motion was carried.

### 10.3 **Student Officer Scrutiny Committee**

Council Notes that:

- Elected Student Officers are accountable, through Council, to the membership of the Students' Union.
- Student Officers provide verbal and written reports to Council throughout their terms of office.
- Student Officer can be questioned on their work by Councillors, both formally and informally.
- Student Officer reports are voted upon by Council, which has the power to ensure that mechanisms are put in place to monitor the work of an Officer.

Council Believes that:

- Student Council meetings do not provide sufficient time to provide detailed scrutiny of the work of Student Officers.
- Student Officer are not sufficiently questioned by Council nor are Student Officer reports given due consideration by many Councillors.
- The Students' Union Council will be more effective if a Scrutiny Committee is established for the purpose of reviewing Student Officer reports and questioning Student Officers.
- Such a Committee should support, and not replace existing scrutiny undertaken by Council.

Council Resolves to:

- Establish a Special Committee, to be known as the Scrutiny Committee of Student Councillors to review the work of Student Officers on an on-going basis for 2019-20 academic year.

Committee Remit:

The remit of the Scrutiny Committee, as delegated by Council, shall be:

- To review the work of Student Officers, in particular by reviewing their published Reports
- The question Student Officers on their published Reports
- To make recommendations to Council on the work of Student Officers
- The make recommendations to Council on existing processes for scrutinising the work of Student Officers

The Council may request the attendance of any Student Officer at a meeting of the Committee.

Student Officers are obliged to attend any meetings to which they are summoned.

The Committee shall meet on at least one occasion between each Statutory Meeting of Council.

The membership of the Committee shall be nine elected members of the Council, with voting rights, and the Union Speaker (who shall chair the Committee), without voting rights.

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)  
 Seconder: Jason Bunting (Vice President Education)

Union President and Proposer, Connor Veighey moved the motion. He explains that this will be a select Committee of Council which will scrutinise the reports and work of the Officers between meetings. This committee can spend longer on scrutinising Officers even more than Council does now.

Councillor [MHLS Rep] David Griffith asks whether both Part-Time Student Officers as well as Full-Time Student Officers would be subject to scrutiny by this Committee.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Grian Ní Dhaimhín spoke on the motion, stating that papers are currently not being made available early enough which means that Councillors are coming to Council without reading papers as there is not adequate time to do so.

Student Mohammed Abdul Salam spoke for the motion, explaining that he was a former Part-Time Student Officer and that he always gave his reports on time and that it is important that students who voted know what their Reps are doing for them.

Councillor Mark Francos [Postgrad Rep] asked how this feeds back into Council.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Union President and Proposer of the motion, Connor Veighey summates. He states that Part-Time Student Officers will be subject to scrutiny by the committee but it needs to be kept in mind that they are student volunteers who are full-time students. He further explains that regarding the timings of papers being circulated to Council, this is facilitated by the Student Voice Team which has undergone a period of staffing change. He also confirmed that the formation of this committee is to enhance scrutiny, not to replace anything, and that the committee will report its findings to Council.

Following a show of voting cards, this motion was carried.

#### 10.4 **Academic Freedom in QUB (Professor Colin Harvey)**

Council notes that:

- Free speech and debate is the corner stone of any democratic society
- Professor Colin Harvey of QUB law school is a highly respected leading academic
- There have been efforts by paramilitaries, and political parties, to oust Professor Harvey due to his opinions and beliefs on the constitutional position of the North of Ireland
- Twenty-one years since the good Friday agreement any type of intimidation from paramilitaries need to be condemned from the highest levels of political office

Council believes that:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of speech and association

- All professors of this University should not be subject to harassment from sections of society, and paramilitaries
- Twenty-one years since the good Friday agreement the aspirations of both traditions needs to be respected

Council instructs:

- The Students' Union to condemn these threats
- The President to write a letter to Professor Harvey, on behalf of all QUB students, to express our solidarity
- Council calls on all political parties to condemn these threats.

Proposer: Niall Polland (Student)  
 Seconder: Pdraig Quinn (Student)

Councillor [School Rep] Niall Polland moves his motion by stating that we as a democratic organisation in the North, we must stand for freedom. That internationally we have shown solidarity to Palestine and locally we have shown solidarity to Alliance for Choice. He further states that his is not a green vs orange issue.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Molly Liggett spoke against the motion by stating that this is Student Council once again trying to twist the issues. The no one is disputing freedom of speech or paramilitary threats. She confirms that the point is the fact that the QUB logo was used on the material and that Queen's should be neutral. She references point 8.01 in the Policy File where the Students' Union has a neutral stance on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland.

Councillor [MHLS Rep] David Griffith speaks on the motion by asking what does 'solidarity' mean? He further states that there may be some twisting or interpreting the motion/policy and that perhaps it should be clarified that it is not about what Professor Colin Harvey says that Council agrees with, but rather it is the fact of freedom of speech.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Sean-Diarmuid Kelliher spoke for the motion, explaining that he has been honoured to work with him at an event and that Councillors shouldn't be focusing about what the research is on, but the fact that researchers should not be being threatened.

Student Officer Postgraduate Gift Sotonye-Frank spoke on the motion asking is this a motion on academic freedom or is it about Professor Colin Harvey, she questions that if this is a policy on freedom, should it be written in such a specific way.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Pdraig Quinn spoke on the motion, quoting Sir George Bain who one stated "What use is a professor if he doesn't profess?" He further commented that UCU stated that it is vital that professors can challenge views without fear of threats.

Councillor [International Rep] Tanys Insley spoke on the motion, stating that she would like this reworded to include both students and staff.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Grian Ní Dhaimhín spoke for the motion stating that we need to protect researchers.

Liam Magill [Part-Time Environmental and Ethical Trading Student Officer] spoke on the motion, stating that the use of the words 'North of Ireland' is divisive, and that potentially this should be amended to 'The Province' or something of the like.

Councillor [School Rep] Leah Rea spoke for the motion, explaining that we shouldn't waste this opportunity not to show our support to our research staff.

Nathan Horbury [All Student Rep] spoke against the motion explaining that he is against all paramilitary threats and that the Union should adopt a consistent approach to

protecting the academic freedom of academics. He stated that that in 1983 when Edgar Graham was murdered by the IRA, the now North Down MP Lady Sylvia Herman reported that there was cheering in the SU and who stated that she would never step foot in the SU again. He stated that the Union never apologised for the hurt it caused.

Councillor [Postgrad Rep] Mark Francos spoke on the motion, explaining that he was fundamentally for freedom of speech and that it doesn't matter what it is, at the end of the day they should be able to put forward their views. With regards to the use of the QUB logo he wasn't sure about the rules around this.

Councillor [School Rep] Eden Baker spoke on the motion, stating that this isn't about green or orange, it isn't a political issue, it is just about academic freedom. She asks that Councillors imagine it was a different research piece.

Councillor [Postgrad Rep] Jamie Waring spoke for the motion stating that he knows of another researcher who has experienced the same thing.

Councillor [Postgraduate Rep] Sophie Carlisle spoke for the motion, explaining that all students are there to carry out research in whatever area they want and with the freedom to do so and with this in mind we should support this motion.

Friendly amendments were submitted and accepted. The motion now reads as follows:

**Academic Freedom in QUB (Professor Colin Harvey)**

Council notes that:

- Free speech and debate is the corner stone of any democratic society
- Professor Colin Harvey of QUB law school is a highly respected leading academic
- There have been efforts by paramilitaries, and political parties, to oust Professor Harvey due to his opinions and beliefs on the constitutional position of the North of Ireland//Northern Ireland
- Twenty-one years since the good Friday agreement any type of intimidation from paramilitaries need to be condemned from the highest levels of political office

Council believes that:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of speech and association
- All professors of this University should not be subject to harassment from sections of society, and paramilitaries
- Twenty-one years since the good Friday agreement the aspirations of both traditions needs to be respected

QUBSU remains politically neutral on the constitutional question and condemns all threats to staff and students as well as the oppression of the freedom of speech.

Student Officer Welfare, Ciarán O'Brien speaks on the motion to ask as a Students' Union can we be politically neutral?

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Councillor [School Rep] Niall Polland summates, stating again that this is not a green or orange issue and that he is unsure why it was construed in this way. He confirms that if this motion passes, he will work to make this a broader motion.

Following a show of voting cards, this motion was carried.

#### 10.4 Support of Parents due to Miscarriage and Stillbirth

##### Council Notes:

- An estimated 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage (the loss of a pregnancy during the first 23 weeks - NHS UK) in the UK, with rates of between 15%, 16% and 18% in women of 20, 25 and 30 years respectively.
- That around 1 in 100 women in the UK experience recurrent miscarriages (three or more miscarriages in a row).
- In 2017 1 in every 225 births ends in a stillbirth (when a baby is born dead after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy - NHS UK,) in the UK which equates to 9 babies every day.
- That in 2016 Northern Ireland had a rate of 3.4 stillbirths per 1,000 births (the lowest on record) compared to the UK average of 4.2 per 1,000 in 2017 (also the lowest on record). However, this is a higher rate than other European countries such as Croatia, Poland and the Czech Republic.
- That around 60% of stillbirths are unexplained and around 50% of recurrent miscarriage causes are unknown.
- That around half of parents who have suffered a stillbirth feel they should not talk about their stillborn baby because it makes others feel "uncomfortable" and two-thirds of parents feel that the people around them believe most stillbirths are unavoidable.

##### Council Believes That:

- Each of these miscarriages and stillbirths are a tragedy and offers condolences to any person, especially students, that have gone through such an experience.
- The loss of 9 babies per day in the United Kingdom due to still birth is still 9 too many.
- Women should feel able to talk about any issue, including going through a miscarriage or stillbirth, openly and honestly without a stigma against them and Men should also feel able to talk about their loss.
- The Government department for Health and the Health and social care trusts within NI must continue to strive to work towards reducing the rate of miscarriages and stillbirths within NI by conducting research and raise awareness of risks. Charities such as
- SANDS (Stillbirth & neonatal death charity) do an exceptionally good work by supporting bereaving parents.

##### Council Resolves That:

- The Students' Union shall engage with the "Baby loss awareness week" campaign from the 9th-15th October every year to reduce stigma of miscarriage and stillbirths as well as stand in solidarity with those who have gone through or are going through this difficult time.
- The Vice President - Welfare shall write to the Minister for Health (or if one is not in place at the time, to party leaders) to encourage them to take action to ensure that all parents who experience pregnancy or baby loss and need specialist psychological support can access it, at a time and place that is right for them, free of charge, wherever they live.

##### References:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/miscarriage/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stillbirth/>
- <https://www.tommys.org/our-organisation/charity-research/pregnancy-statistics/miscarriage>
- <https://www.tommys.org/our-organisation/charity-research/pregnancy-statistics/stillbirth>

- <https://www.sands.org.uk/baby-loss-awareness-week>
- <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2018/09/06/lucy-selman-reducing-preventable-stillbirth-rates-in-the-uk/>

Proposer: David Griffith (Student)  
 Seconder: Molly Liggett (Student)

Before discussion takes place on this motion, the Chair makes a trigger warning, to ensure that there is appropriate time given for Councillors to leave the room if they feel that they do not want to be a part of this debate.

Councillor [MHLS Rep] and proposer of the motion David Griffith moves the motion. He states that he tried to base it as scientifically as possible. He states that this issue is one that is very personal to him and his family. He states that one in four pregnancies end in miscarriage and that we stand in solidarity with the women and men who through this. He also commented on the stigma that is still around it, with family and friends finding it difficult to broach the subject or know what to say.

Councillor [School Rep] Leah Rea spoke for the motion, thanking David Griffith for sharing and asked whether could we add writing a letter to Emma Little Pengelly MP as there is currently work being done in this area.

A friendly amendment was submitted and accepted. The motion now reads as follows:

### **Support of Parents due to Miscarriage and Stillbirth**

Council Notes:

- An estimated 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage (the loss of a pregnancy during the first 23 weeks - NHS UK) in the UK, with rates of between 15%, 16% and 18% in women of 20, 25 and 30 years respectively.
- That around 1 in 100 women in the UK experience recurrent miscarriages (three or more miscarriages in a row).
- In 2017 1 in every 225 births ends in a stillbirth (when a baby is born dead after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy - NHS UK,) in the UK which equates to 9 babies every day.
- That in 2016 Northern Ireland had a rate of 3.4 stillbirths per 1,000 births (the lowest on record) compared to the UK average of 4.2 per 1,000 in 2017 (also the lowest on record). However, this is a higher rate than other European countries such as Croatia, Poland and the Czech Republic.
- That around 60% of stillbirths are unexplained and around 50% of recurrent miscarriage causes are unknown.
- That around half of parents who have suffered a stillbirth feel they should not talk about their stillborn baby because it makes others feel "uncomfortable" and two-thirds of parents feel that the people around them believe most stillbirths are unavoidable.

Council Believes That:

- Each of these miscarriages and stillbirths are a tragedy and offers condolences to any person, especially students, that have gone through such an experience.
- The loss of 9 babies per day in the United Kingdom due to still birth is still 9 too many.
- Women and pregnant people should feel able to talk about any issue, including going through a miscarriage or stillbirth, openly and honestly without a stigma against them and Men should also feel able to talk about their loss.
- The Government department for Health and the Health and social care trusts within NI must continue to strive to work towards reducing the rate of miscarriages and stillbirths within NI by conducting research and raise awareness of risks. Charities such as

- SANDS (Stillbirth & neonatal death charity) do an exceptionally good work by supporting bereaving parents.

Council Resolves That:

- The Students' Union shall engage with the "Baby loss awareness week" campaign from the 9th-15th October every year to reduce stigma of miscarriage and stillbirths as well as stand in solidarity with those who have gone through or are going through this difficult time.
- The Vice President - Welfare shall write to the Minister for Health (or if one is not in place at the time, to party leaders) to encourage them to take action to ensure that all parents who experience pregnancy or baby loss and need specialist psychological support can access it, at a time and place that is right for them, free of charge, wherever they live; and to call for better established perinatal care and testing in early pregnancy.

References:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/miscarriage/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stillbirth/>
- <https://www.tommys.org/our-organisation/charity-research/pregnancy-statistics/miscarriage>
- <https://www.tommys.org/our-organisation/charity-research/pregnancy-statistics/stillbirth>
- <https://www.sands.org.uk/baby-loss-awareness-week>
- <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2018/09/06/lucy-selman-reducing-preventable-stillbirth-rates-in-the-uk/>

Proposer: David Griffith (Student)

Secunder: Molly Liggett (Student)

Councillor [EPS Rep] Emily Bond states that "The loss of 9 babies per day in the United Kingdom due to still birth is still 9 too many." could be seen as placing blame on the woman.

Councillor [School Rep] Eden Baker spoke on the motion, thanking David for sharing and to ask Councillors to stop nit-picking at the language used and to remember that we are standing in solidarity with these women who have gone through this awful experience.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Councillor [MHLS Rep] and proposer of the motion David Griffith summates, he explains that he was not placing blame on the woman and that that line was a quote taken from The BMJ Opinion website. He thanked everyone for their comments and support.

Following a show of voting cards, this motion was carried.

## 10.5 Pledge for Climate Action

This Council acknowledges:

- The passing of a Climate Emergency motion at the last meeting of Student Council on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2019 that declared a Climate Emergency, mandated the Students' Union to lobby the University to become net-zero carbon neutral by 2030 and the establishment of a Climate Action Group in the Union.

This Council also Acknowledges:

- The significance of school strikes for climate action and the growing frustration and activism of school children and young people cross the world.

This Council Recognises:

- The establishment of Múscail, a network of Belfast-based community, trade union, human rights, environmental organisations and school pupils mobilising in response to the climate crisis and the development of a five point pledge for schools and workplaces that is as follows:

“Making Another World Possible”

5 pledges for Environmentally Responsible Schools and Workplaces

Bees, Trees and Sustainability

We will start and/or participate within the school, workplace and the wider community to protect biodiversity and fight carbon emissions

Leave it in the Ground

We will remove materials that produce a high carbon output from our schools and workplaces

Retrofitting for the Future

We will become Carbon Neutral by 2030. We will audit the carbon output of our school or workplace and develop an ‘Action Plan to Zero by 2030’ within a year of adopting this pledge.

This will involve:

Identifying how any planned maintenance, refurbishments or rebuilds will support the environment

Transferring to renewable energy where possible

Changing how we use our buildings and spaces, such as electricity usage.

Promote the Positive

We will develop policies and procedures that support and reward behaviour which protects the environment. This ranges from:

Promoting walking, cycling and using public transport to travel to and from school or work;

Engaging creatively with the Student Climate Strike global movement to raise awareness of the climate breakdown;

Leading or volunteering on recycling or local ‘clean-up’ schemes

Sharing Best Practice

We will appoint colleagues, students, teachers, parents and staff to be part of a network which can publicly share resources, ideas and best practices. We will develop ways of integrating this work into school/work time. We have to change the way we do things, not just do more.

Who will pay for this?

We will do what we can with what we have. Unlocking the resources and expertise that exist in our families, communities, schools and workplaces is critical in preventing climate breakdown.

However, organisations that sign this pledge will also be invited to support campaigns which call for environmental justice by making big polluters pay big taxes to fund sustainable alternatives.”

Therefore, this Council Mandates:

- The Students’ Union to sign this pledge;
- The new Climate Action Group to work with Múscail and other environmentalist and civil society groups to put this pledge into action;
- The Students’ Union Executive to lobby the University to act on the principles of this pledge.

Proposer: Grian Ní Dhaimhín (Student)

Seconder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Student Activities)

Councillor [AHSS Rep] and Proposer of this motion Grian Ní Dhaimhín moved the motion.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion was carried.

#### 11. REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is none.

*There have been no further meetings of the Management Board since the Statutory Meeting of Council held on 28 October 2019.*

Council agreed that consideration of this matter be postponed until the 2 December Statutory Meeting of Council.

#### 12. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1	Report of the Executive Management Committee	
12.2	Report of the Union President	SUC/P/19/15
12.3	Report of the Vice President Education	SUC/P/19/16
12.4	Report of the Vice President Equality and Diversity	SUC/P/19/17
12.5	Report of the Vice President Postgraduate	SUC/P/19/18
12.6	Report of the Vice President Student Activities	SUC/P/19/19
12.7	Report of the Vice President Welfare	SUC/P/19/20

Council agreed that consideration of this matter be postponed until the 2 December Statutory Meeting of Council.

#### 13. REPORTS FROM OTHER UNION COMMITTEES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Report of the Standing Committee (*to follow*)

Council agreed that consideration of this matter be postponed until the 2 December Statutory Meeting of Council.

14. REPORTS FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES.

There are none.

Council agreed that consideration of this matter be postponed until the 2 December Statutory Meeting of Council.

15. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS.

There are none.

Council agreed that consideration of this matter be postponed until the 2 December Statutory Meeting of Council.

16. QUESTIONS (TO ELECTED STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES)

16.1 *To the Union President*

Within the OMNI project, can you provide a timeframe as to when we will see the development of evidence-based campaigns, which was detailed as an outcome of the work thus far in your plan of work?

Proposer: Grian Ní Dhaimhín (Student)

The below answer was submitted by Union President following the Council Meeting but not within ten working days as outlined in point 19.3 of the Constitution.

“The OMNI survey closed at the end of the 2018/19 academic year and analysis was carried out by academics and students involved in the Q-Step Programme over summer 2019.

The analysis was used as the basis of an OMNI results report which was completed late November 2019.

Headline figures coming out of the survey results were reported to students and relevant departments of both the SU and University over the course of the first semester while the full report was being completed. These headlines have been used to begin to shape the directions that the institution needs to head in and the actions it needs to take to address student mental health.

The full report is due to be presented to the Strategic Group on December 9th and will be presented to students as early as possible (the time of year makes this difficult so it will likely be second semester – discussions are already underway about the format of this). I would like to present these to Council next semester – given an already full agenda for the December meeting of Council and the fact that the fully-designed, presentable version of the report won't have been produced by the meeting, I'd prefer to leave a full presentation until either the next Council session or a special info session called for the purpose.

In terms of the development of evidence-based campaigns, there are two sides to be considered. Firstly, the data-based, policy-focused lobbying campaign that OMNI was designed to be is already underway. Due to the need to raise issues contained within the OMNI findings at particular committees etc. we have used the headline figures to influence certain policies, initiatives etc. over the last number of months. This will accelerate once the Strategic Group meets for the first time and once the full data is presented.

Secondly, while this is a policy / lobbying focussed campaign, there is a need to think about ground activity and keeping students engaged in OMNI. Thought has been given to this, though I'd really appreciate any thoughts of Council on this, but given the desire to get the data first and work off that this will pick up in second semester.

This addresses the timeline around OMNI, I'm happy to talk more about this and also the actual content of OMNI (as well as other mental health initiatives the SU has become involved in at the next meeting of Council."

#### 16.2 *To the Vice President Welfare*

As students will begin looking for new tenancies early in the new year, is there any update on the development of the Landlord Rating Service and will these be available for the peak time of around February-April time when students are viewing houses?

Proposer: Grian Ní Dhaimhín (Student)

The below answer was submitted by the Vice President Welfare following the Council Meeting but not within ten working days as outlined in point 19.3 of the Constitution.

"The SU has partnered with Marks Out of Tenancy – which is a brand new landlord/letting agent review site that was designed by and for tenants and housing activists. The benefits of this site is that it allows students to rate their properties, landlords, and letting agents without fear of libel and other legal repercussions. It also keeps the SU free of any such legal liabilities should a landlord decide to take a case charge of libel against a review. It also allows students to upload photos of their homes onto the site to timestamp photos that will help with deposit reclaims. The site also allows students to record whether their home is HMO registered and whether the landlord abides by the law regarding the protection of deposits. This will help with a wider campaign that we've initiated talks with Belfast City Councillors regarding unregistered HMOs. This is exceptionally important as 2 of the 3 evictions uncovered this semester have been due to landlords renting out homes without an appropriate license.

The site is starting from scratch so we need the SU and student renters alike to use and promote the site to make it work. I myself was the first in Belfast to leave a review. There is currently only 3 lodged on the site for Belfast. So it is imperative we start to use this ASAP. It has been promoted within the Student Renters Group and outside via our leaflets. I expect however once it is shared digitally that it will take off.

There should be a concerted effort by those of the SRG and the wider student body to recruit honest reviews of 'that letting agent across from the holylands spar' who remains the most prominent rogue landlord within the area.

I am in discussion with the site designers to again upload a feature that allows students to upload images of their home which can be publically viewable by other prospective tenants who may be house hunting in-order to combat the false advertisement of properties that is occurring.

Again: this site will only be useful if students and activists lead by example and start using the site and promoting it."

#### 16.3 *To the Vice President Student Activities*

Can you provide information received from a freedom of Information Request you both mentioned in your plan of work regarding money the university makes from off-campus disciplinary fines and the university's off-campus discipline procedures?

Proposer: Grian Ní Dhaimhín (Student)

The below answer was submitted by the Vice President Student Activities following the Council Meeting but not within ten working days as outlined in point 19.3 of the Constitution.

“I had mentioned in my plan of work that I would have those FOI's complete by the end of October, that's been pushed back to the end of December. Off Campus is a massive priority but first semester so far has been insanely packed for both myself and Ciaran, and some things haven't fitted into the time frame I would have liked. For me, now that a lot of my big events are out of the way, I'll have more time to be in the office working on FOI's for off campus, and environmental things – I'll update council once we do have information received from those FOI's

Just for your information, the most update information we have about money from fines was in 2017 – From 2010-2017 – the uni made £59,660 from Disciplinary Officer fines and £14,800 from Committee of Discipline fines, coming from 807 cases, and that money supposedly goes towards student hardship funds and other student support services So we just need to follow up on getting figures from 2017 to date.”

16.4 *To the Vice President Student Activities*

What has been the response by students and some of the outcomes thus far from your SU Engagement Campaign?

Proposer: Grian Ní Dhaimhín (Student)

The below answer was submitted by Vice President Student Activities following the Council Meeting.

“SU Engagement Campaign has been really positive! So far we've done sessions on: getting people to vote in the student reps election last month, feedback on what people associate with the SU, promoting Advice SU services, feedback on what students think of Canvas, and today we were out promoting Enterprise SU's what's the big idea We got 234 responses from students in 2 hours one week asking students what they associated with the SU, and 55 responses one week on asking students what they thought of Canvas. That's really valuable information to us that will help us in our communications with students and the university on Canvas as well.

Response by students has been really positive so far, and we've definitely seen increased engagement between ourselves, students across campus and other staff in the SU which is fantastic, and that's really all we're looking for – its early days because applications for a lot of our SU Initiatives haven't closed yet but we're hoping to see an increase in applications and a better understanding of the services we offer.”

Council agreed that consideration of these matters be postponed until the 2 December Statutory Meeting of Council.

17. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

There are none.

Council agreed that consideration of this matter be postponed until the 2 December Statutory Meeting of Council.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Ms Lawrence announced that the next Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council would take place on Monday 2 December at 6.00 p.m. in the Lounge, Level 1, SU - Elmwood.

Kristina Connolly (Deputy Clerk, Students' Union Council)