

Community & Welfare Board – Minutes of Proceedings

*The fourth Ordinary Meeting of the Community & Welfare Board for the 2019-20 Session was held on
Tuesday 11th February*

Location: G01, Royal School of Mines, South Kensington campus

Attending

Deputy President (Welfare)	Shervin Sabeghi (DPW)
CGCU Wellbeing Chair	Matthew Scott (MS)
RCSU Vice President (Welfare & Wellbeing)	Peter Hull (PH)
RSMU Vice President Welfare	Arman Sarou (AS)
GSU Taught Academic & Welfare Officer (Natural Sciences)	Tilivaldi Ilahunov (TI)
LGBT+ Officer	Freya Hepworth Lloyd (FHL)
Ethics & Environment Officer	Francesca Siracusa (FS)
International Students Officer	Amr Alwishah (AAL)
Interfaith Officer	Amna Ahmed (AAH)
Biochemistry Department Wellbeing Rep	Ruben Colindres Zuehlke (RCZ)
Earth Science & Engineering Department Wellbeing Rep	Katie McCann (KM)

Observers:

Nil

Apologies:

Disabilities Officer	Hilliam Tung
Mental Health Officer	Ambika Bharadwaj
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department Wellbeing Rep	Louise Benard
Materials Department Wellbeing Rep	Emmeline Poole

Clerk:

Representation Coordinator (Wellbeing)	Gabrielle Fulton (GF)
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Chairs Business

1. **Welcome**
 - a. DPW welcomes everyone. Acknowledges that the meeting is not quorate but there will be no voting required.
2. **Apologies for Absence**
 - a. DPW reads the apologies (see above).
3. **Minutes of previous meeting**
 - a. Some amendments sent to GF which have been updated. No further comments around the room, minutes taken as approved.
4. **Action Tracker**
 - a. DPW to make amendments to Liberation Reform Paper. The amendments have been made since last meeting.
 - b. DPW to look over current policies on initiation ceremonies. This will form part of matters for discussion in this meeting.

- c. DPW to send 3 policies to CWB members for comment: Safe Space Policy will be discussed today. The Religious Observance and Accessibility Policy will be discussed next meeting.
- d. DPW to enquire with College regarding rat sightings. Nothing to update yet.
- e. QUESTIONS: AAL: Any update on External Speaker Policy? DPW: Have had a look over it; a lot of this policy refers to laws around adhering to the Equality Act, freedom of speech, etc. Important to note that there is a lack of CWB meetings left, compared to the amount of policies we need to review. Hoping to have input on this policy, but cannot confirm now as it is owned by the Board of Trustees. No further questions.

Matters for Report

5. DPW Report

- a. Have sent around report for CWB, it is the same as my council report. Have changed the format a bit to reflect key areas that are relevant at the time. An area to highlight now is an update on Halls Rent. For those who weren't at the recent Council meeting – it was the third time that council rejected the proposal from College. We voted on starting an 'Imperial Cut the Rent Campaign' and discussed what actions might be taken in that campaign, e.g. influencing staff members through letter writing/emails and more direct/inflammatory actions, e.g. exploring rent strikes or creating a network of private landlords to diver first years away from first year halls.
- b. In a blog article on the Union website, there is a sign-up form for those who would like to be involved. Once we have more sign ups, we will start to invite council members and interested students to discuss how this campaign can progress.
- c. For some context, what was presented last time we met with College was a £3 million subsidy over the 5-year period that we are being asked to review. As we were promised at the time, that subsidy is still in effect despite us rejecting the model. Important to note that saying no the number of the times we did lead to a tangible change for students even though it's not something we are happy to accept, our willingness to not bow down meant we were offered a £3 million reduction, however we will still be remaining firm on what we believe as Council.
- d. We were told that the prices would go up on the College website today, but I haven't seen them yet. It was indicated that they would be going for 'option 2' which is the slight rebalance of North Acton and South Kensington Halls. It's the second most neutral increase that they could have done.
- e. Out of the £3 million – £2.9 million would be injected into the amount expected to recoup over 5-years. 100K would be specifically earmarked for a reduction in Hall Seniors Rent as a result of what we voted on in our first discussion on Halls Rent.
- f. QUESTIONS:
 - i. AS: Have faculty members of staff been involved in the discussion? DPW: This has mainly been discussed by the Provost, Campus Services and staff from the finance division of College. DPW has tried to keep faculties up to date during our meetings but it has not been something where the College has invited staff members to give a view. The Provost gives regular updates to Heads of Departments as things have gone on.
 - ii. TPH: I don't understand the justification for the £3 million. DPW: Essentially, they want to move to this model, but they recognise that it's important to smooth the

impact of the rent increases therefore they will invest £3 million over the 5 years. Perhaps, they saw it as a way to get students on board.

- iii. PH: Of the £3 million injection, 100k is specifically for decreasing rent for Hall Seniors, is this with our approval? DPW: No this was rejected again. There is no correct way to split that money so there is no reason for Abhijay and I to engage in that post Council rejecting it.
- iv. TI: To get an idea of the £3 million, what is the total amount of rent increase? DPW: As they are adding in a new hall it is difficult to answer. The total cost over 5 years as they original presented it, is approx. £113 million. In terms of actual money, it's about a couple million a year.
- v. No further questions.

6. CU Welfare Officer Reports

- a. GSU Taught Academic & Welfare Officer (Natural Science)
 - i. In terms of GSU, the PG Ball is almost sold out. Going well in general.
 - ii. GSU planning on launching quite a few wellbeing events. I am not completely up to date with this but there has been talk of applying for funding for these events, will update when I know more.
- b. RSMU Vice President Welfare
 - i. The Material Dep Rep wanted to feedback about the IOS Panopto issue which has been sorted now. In retrospect, we realise it should be looked at sooner. Going forward, it seems like more of an academic issue so I will be passing that on.
 - ii. KM: We don't have a Wellbeing Advisor within our department at the moment. There hasn't seemed to be any issues from this as of yet, but we are thinking of sharing one with Design Engineering.
 - iii. AS: January Blues Campaign (from 28th Jan) was successful. Yoga was very popular, so we hope to find ways to fund that to happen a more regular basis. Other than that, things are going quite smoothly.
- c. CGCU Wellbeing Officer
 - i. Last night we had an event for LGBT History Month – 'Faces of Engineering: How to be the best ally'. There was a panel discussion of 4, organised over a couple of weeks. CGCU bar night at the same time so attendance split but overall, the event went very well.
 - ii. We have been organising a dog petting event that's coming up – don't have exact dates at the moment.
 - iii. Valentine's Day event on sexual health awareness. We will have a stand with free condoms.
- d. RCSU Vice President (Welfare & Wellbeing)
 - i. The main thing we have been busy with is organising a full week of wellbeing related activities. It will be for students to specifically take time out of study to focus on themselves. Will include things such as dog petting, art sessions in collab with Environmental Society, yoga. Will be our main big event of this term with some smaller events.
 - ii. Plan to run personal tutoring surveys within our departments, will keep you updated.

7. L&C Officer Reports

- a. LGBT+ Officer:

- i. LGBT Month at the moment. There are lots of events on. It has been going really well so far. The Constituent Unions have been really engaged. Move Imperial has also been involved – rainbow laces for Varsity as well as a pledge of allegiance to LGBT people during Varsity. ACC will be Pride themed as well.
- b. International Officer
 - i. Not much to update as have been ill for the past 2 weeks. Had a Welcome Back event planned but hopefully I can get that back in the pipeline.
- c. Interfaith Officer
 - i. It's been hard to get the faith societies to work together. Have decided that my main focus from now will be working on the responses from the surveys I sent out which asked people about their faith related issues on campus. Most of the things that have come up have been available prayer spaces, lecture times clashing with prayer times, as well as term and exam times. Ramadan is one example so will be collaborating with ISoc about this.
 - ii. Have been in conversation with Move Imperial about having a protected time during the week for swimming and using the gym that is gender segregated.

Matters for Discussion/Decision

8. Liberation Reform Plan

- a. At last ordinary council, the plan was approved. Including the introduction of the Working Class Officer and creating liberation networks – all set to go – most of the work is still yet to be done – we now need to work out how that's going to look. I want that to still lie within CWB/consult CSPs (as mandated in the Council paper) – want this to be a co-creation of what the reform should look like.
- b. I am proposing that we look at this in 4 streams. **1) Procedures and governance:** establishing how finances are managed, how the networks will fit into pre-existing governance, who's responsible for what, what policies do we need. **2) Defining the networks:** what do we expect, what roles are included in each network and what their goals/purposes are, looking at where the networks align with current CSPs. **3) Campaigns:** The Union is looking at how they support campaigns, and this is a good opportunity for us to rebuild our processes in campaigning and how they can feed into the networks. **4) Support/alignment:** This is everything that goes around the networks, i.e. what support the networks get from the union, what support the networks get from the College – so establishing who the key contacts are at College (relevant to each network) and where these networks should have involvement with the College.
- c. DPW proposes that there is one meeting for each of these streams and then take the information from those meetings back to the Liberation Reform Working Group. Any development will of course be presented at CWB. DPW requests volunteers to be involved in each stream but the consensus around the room is that it is hard to commit at this point. General agreement that if there is one stream for 'defining a network' then each LCO will need to be consulted on this on an individual level. CSPs should be consulted on an individual level on how they may overlap with a network. Alongside this, it should be established how the LCO roles & networks overlap with each other. FHL: The more included CSPs feel in the decision making, the more engaged they will be in establishing the networks.
- d. DPW: Are there things missing in what we need to consider, going forward? PH: Maybe slightly more emphasis on alignment with current CSPs, other than that it's fine.

- e. DPW: It seems like the best thing to do is continue the Liberation Reform Working Group and set each stream on the agenda, rather than get volunteers for each stream. No objections around the room.
- f. DPW urges people to please engage in Teams discussion on this so we can make it collaborative effort. It also needs to be done with a certain time period.
- g. TI leaves.

BREAK

9. Safe Space Policy

- a. DPW has sent this around a couple of times – have gotten feedback for one person so far.
- b. RCZ: have met with PAARRY about it – they gave me some comments on it.
- c. DPW asks for general thoughts. Based on the discussion today, I will go away and re-draft it and we leave the approval for an additional meeting.
- d. AS: Can we hear the suggestions you have had? DPW: The Disabilities Officer, suggested we should expand the policy to be enforced on behaviour at all Union events/activities not just on physical spaces. As well as include what happens on social media, sharing of explicit images, sexual blackmailing and unwelcome sexually explicit comments.
- e. DPW strongly agrees that the policy is too narrow and there is no reason why it couldn't cover union activities and not just union literal spaces. We cannot enforce rules on external people, but this is about what happens during our events/activities. We would still need to keep what happens in physical spaces in the policy, but we can still definitely widen the scope.
- f. FHL: Agrees with the need to widen the scope. It should include propaganda as well so flyers and posters. Can this be applied to field trips organised by departments? DPW: I don't think this is something we can do with this policy as it is not our jurisdiction but within the Union we are reviewing our disciplinary policies – we do not currently have a code of conduct at present, what the review of those disciplinary policies are looking to do is to implement at a code of conduct for Union members, e.g. treat people with respect, inclusivity, etc. In some ways this could fold into the Safe Space Policy in which users of a spaces are expected to behave in a certain way. We can think quite generally about the Safe Space Policy, but we cannot specify behaviour on field trips in particular. There is potential to influence the College to take a bigger stance on field trips, but it would be a separate piece of work from this.
- g. AAH: I think we should better define the systems for reporting things that go against the Safe Space Policy. DPW: Conveniently, with the disciplinary review will come with it better reporting tools which we will be able to refer to.
- h. RCZ: For visibility of the Safe Space Policy, it would be beneficial to have something like a placard in the Union, so people know the policy exists. In discussion we PAARRY, the point was raised on whether support and care should be mentioned in this policy. (FS arrives). Another suggestion is throughout the policy to have an abstract definition and some specific examples. Do we want to name certain things in terms of discriminatory culture? For example, be more explicit and name what we do not tolerate such as racism/homophobia/etc. PAARRY also requested that we change 'sexual harassment' to 'sexual misconduct'.
- i. DPW: There is a fine line between being so vague that it doesn't mean anything and then so specific if something does not fall into that definition so this will be taken into account.

- j. AAL: Agrees that reporting should be explicitly stated and on top of that, what the penalties are.
- k. AS asks DPW if they have read through any other Union safe space policies. DPW: I did but found quite similar policies to ours with varied levels of specification. AS: I think the ideas of specific examples is a good idea. The SOAS Students' Union Safer Space Policy states *'We will interrupt oppressive behaviour, which we define as any conduct that demeans, marginalizes, rejects, threatens or harms anyone on the basis of ability, activist experience, age, cultural background, education, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, physical appearance, race, religion, self-expression, sexual orientation, status as a parent or other such factors.'*
- l. DPW: Currently the Safe Space Policy is focused on things that people shouldn't do. Do we think that we should be adjusting this to have list of things we should do? In other words, we can either have a set of rules that if broken will result in disciplinary action or a list of expectations/values that we expect from students and if you don't adhere to them then you're up for disciplinary process.
- m. FS: I like the idea of code of conduct, I think it should be something on its own. If there was an incident and the union was involved, you could use both and I think the code of conduct would be useful because some incidents are shades of grey. DPW: Agrees that a code of conduct would be useful in incidents are unclear. The code of conduct loses its power if it is too specific. I think it is important to have a Safe Space Policy where in our spaces there is a zero-tolerance policy towards certain things and if these things occur then you can report them and expect this action. Plus, an additional code of conduct that is separate from the Safe Space Policy. No objections around the room.
- n. DPW: Is there enough focus on inclusivity? Is direct discriminatory behaviour enough or should exclusion also be considered? We should be clearer on what is meant by an 'act of exclusion. It should be geared towards to if you are not making efforts to include something then that should be consider a behaviour. FHL: Could we have that in the code of conduct? DPW thinks that makes more sense. AAH: It sounds good but how could you prove that someone is being excluded on a discriminatory basis? DPW: It is still important to have a clear stance that it is not acceptable even if you are not always going to be able to prove it.
- o. AS: Discriminatory dress and offensive slogans– how are things like that defined? DPW: We are talking about cultural appropriation dress and more explicit examples like 'blackface'.
- p. DPW: What should the consequences be? Who decides when these should be applied? Who can consequences apply to – groups as well as individuals? I am not too sure on how much this would fall under the Safe Space Policy or if would fall under disciplinary procedures. RCZ: I think when looking at Union Policy it should forward to the disciplinary policy so as a Union there is consistency on how things are dealt with. It should include how to appeal it as well. It seems like it needs its own policy rather than part of the Safe Space Policy. FH: I agree, there should be a whole other policy that is referenced. An infographic that specifies offences and what category they fit into would be good. Also, a really clear directory of how to report and who to and what the consequences would be (maybe a flow diagram). DPW: Agrees that something that explains it clearly is a good idea.
- q. DPW: We should be including some mention of disciplinary procedures in the Safe Space Policy and the reason for this is our disciplinary policies (whatever they might look like) will only refer to students. We potential still need something in the Safe Space Policy, that

states in our physical spaces that we run, there are immediate consequences for breaking the rules be you a student, staff member, external person, etc. In other words, it should be clearly stated that a Bar Manager (for example) can ask security to remove someone for being racist (for example). It should refer to where to report both immediately and 'after the fact' which is where the disciplinary policies would take over. The blurred line is that the Union does not necessarily need a complaint to investigate something so there needs to be something that covers that as well. It will need to be clear on what rises to an investigation.

- r. AS: Who is the designated premises supervisor? DPW: I would imagine that would be the duty Manager, I am not entirely sure. It is worth being clearer on that. AS: I think its important that on a bar night if there was an incident, that a warning would come from a member of staff. I would not feel comfortable giving a verbal warning. DPW: In terms of the physical spaces, it would definitely be a member of staff. If it was during an activity somewhere else, there is recourse for a student to give a verbal warning.
AS: Will that be reflected in the safe space policy? DPW: If we are talking about a situation that is during an activity away from a physical space then those situations will refer to the reporting and the complaint. We would not have jurisdiction to necessarily remove someone from an external venue, but it can probably be folded in, in some sensible way.
- s. DPW: Was there anything else missing? RCZ: Within the reporting section, can there be a section that states where you can get support/care? DPW: It's not going to be possible to signpost everything that could potentially happen. I don't think it's appropriate in the policy. There is potential for a general signpost. RCZ: Maybe one sentence on support and care. DPW: I think that is doable just not specifically listing each service.
- t. FS: Do we want to put anything about photos and social media? DPW: This was discussed already and yes; the policy should cover this. Exactly what this looks like, we are unsure. You could argue we need a social media policy, but we will be exploring this idea.
- u. AAH: If it is defined in the sexual misconduct section that it is an offence to take the photo in the first place, is that correct? PH: I don't think that is sufficient because you could get the photo from someone else. DPW: This is quite a big thing and I don't know if we have total control over this. Even if it is a photo taken on our premises, I don't know if what happens with that photo is something, we have control over and something that we can discipline students for. FS: It is against the law so maybe it is a matter of supporting students. If something like that happened to me then I went to the Union and didn't have stance on this type of thing then that would be shocking. DPW: We will make sure that, that type of behaviour is somewhere in our policies whether it is in the Safe Space Policy or against the Code of Conduct. There is potentially a bigger thing here that we might have to look at separately. If we think of the sharing of explicit images to be included in the definition of sexual harassment - it's difficult because how someone might share an image in the context of our activities is difficult to define. RCZ: We as the Union have to take statement whether it was taken at a specific event or shared around by CSPs, it is important for us as a Union to taken action. AAH: I agree that we should as a principle, but I also understand what the DPW is saying – that it is difficult. RS: It's a rabbit hole but I think it's important to take stance. DPW: I think this a big area that we need to discuss in more depth. **ACTION:** Look at what the recourse of this is currently, as well as how and where to define this in policy.
- v. DPW: How do we ensure the policy is being adhered to? What checking mechanisms do we need? RCZ: Considering security during bar nights and ACCs as in the past some people felt like security wasn't intervening enough. It raises the question of who has

responsibility to intervene whether in physical or digital spaces. Someone needs to be held accountable in a certain way. DPW: Agrees and thinks this can be incorporated into volunteer training. As a minimum people should know that the policy exists, and they have responsibility to it.

- w. DPW: Do people think that there needs to be some oversight in what is happening? Be in through me or something presented to CWB? AS and AAH agree that it would be good if it was presented to CWB to identify trends.
- x. DPW: There are thoughts around initiations and how these ties into the policy. They are difficult to define. Should they be covered in this policy? There are already CSP policies that define initiation. One idea I wanted to present is an anonymous online tool for people to report to give the Union an idea of what is going on. General feedback around the room is that this tool would be good. FS: This tool should specify that this is not a complaint that has an action attached as that might deter people. FHL: Potential to make it optional to name the society and/or take action. AS: At the very least, initiations should be mentioned in the Safe Space Policy.
- y. DPW: That has been a lot of good discussion. I will bring this information into something a bit more concise (draft something) and send it back around and then we can have an approval discussion at the next meeting (**ACTION**).

Any other business (AOB)

- 10. FHL: There are several student rainbow lanyards that were ordered for LGBT History Month. If you come to any of the events, you'll get to pick one up.
- 11. DPW thanks everyone for attending.

Meeting Concludes at [20:21]

Next meeting

Tuesday 10th March 2020, 18:00 – 20:00, Room RSM G01