



## Minutes

**Title:** YUSU AGM (Student Members' Meeting)

**Date:** 8 May 2019

**Venue:** D/L/36, University of York

**Present:** The meeting was open to all students

### 1) Approval of Previous Minutes

The Chair, Kelly Balmer (KB), the Policy Coordinator, opened the meeting noting that quorum had been met. She then invited members to review the minutes of the previous AGM from 11 June 2018. No questions were received. The minutes were ratified.

### 2) Report from Trustees on the Union's Activity

The Chair of the Trustees and Union President, James Durcan (JD) presented on key activity over the period of the 2017-18 academic and financial year. He noted YUSU was reaching the final stretch of its strategic plan and provided an update on performance. On values, he highlighted 86% of students had told YUSU that they believe the Union is run for, with and by students; over three quarters (78%) believe it is inclusive; and two thirds (67%) believe that the Union is brave. He went on to set out performance against YUSU's key strategic themes of: representation, communities, opportunities and wellbeing. Highlights included YUSU's highest ever election turnout, the development of 'YUSU develops' a training and employability programme within the Union, and the delivery of exceptionally high satisfaction rates from students accessing the YUSU advice and support service.

The period saw new marketing and commercial developments, such as a new approach to Freshers' Week with 'Freshers' Festival' replacing the 'Takeover' event and the expansion of commercial venues. As a major employer of student staff, 128 members of student staff were paid £410,000 over the period.

Finally, James Durcan noted that 2017/18 saw a series of developments in terms of building organisational resilience, trustees took a difficult decision to close the YUSU shop based on the exposure to risk and fact it was not providing substantive student benefit. This decision enabled the venue expansion for the start of the academic year, offering more sustainable income and greater student benefit in terms of spaces that enhance student life and income generation.

On the theme of investing in the future, he noted that people investment has been important to ensure staff, officers and trustees are effective, motivated and suitably skilled to deliver the best for students. A key achievement included securing Best Companies accreditation and the confirmation of YUSU as 21<sup>st</sup> in the Sunday Times' top 100 not for profit organisations to work for.

The presentation is [available here](#).

### 3) The Union Accounts

The Chair of the Finance Committee, James Hare (JH) presented the YUSU annual accounts (2017-18) to the group covering overall financial activities, incoming resources, outgoing resources and YUSU's balance sheet. The presentation is [available here](#).

He reported that the accounts had been audited by YUSU's external auditors BHP, reviewed and approved by the Trustee Board and submitted to the Charity Commission. The accounts set out the consolidated position for the year which includes YUSU and commercial services trading. He highlighted:

- YUSU had experienced a small decrease in income by £41k in contrast to the previous year. Combined with a small decrease in expenditure this resulted in a surplus overall of £32k.
- Looking in more detail at incoming resources he noted a year on year comparison showed increases and decreases across major areas with; the annual block grant increasing by 3% (up £109k) (including facilities in kind); charitable activities slightly decreasing by 0.2% (down £26k) but at the same overall percentage of income as a whole as last year and trading activities decreasing 3% (down £124k on an away Roses year).
- Turning to outgoing resources, he noted investment has increased by 67k from the previous year's accounts.
- Looking at the balance sheet, he noted it demonstrated a positive total funds balance of £447K, with an unrestricted deficit of £3k being offset by a restricted funds balance of £450K.

Looking ahead, JH highlighted four key, ongoing considerations:

- First, the acknowledgement of the University of York's role as a key funder.
- Second, reserve levels. Trustees had reviewed on a risk management basis, resulting in a target of one to three months of operational costs being maintained. JH stated that Officers had previously shared the Board's focus on improving levels to at least the mid point of the target range over the next few years and reiterated that this target remained in place.
- Third, Brexit, still on the horizon continued to bring significant economic uncertainty with likely implications for student numbers.
- Finally, campus development remained a key priority and focus for the year ahead. Trustees continued to review YUSU's offer to students in the context of the opportunities and challenges that wider estate planning will offer for students.

The full accounts were made available at the meeting and can be [viewed online](#).

### 4) Current Affiliations

The Chair presented the Union's affiliations:

1. NUS – The National Union of Students - £43,126 and;
2. BUCS – British Universities & Colleges Sports £13,355.

No questions were received on affiliations.

### 5) Officer Trustee Reporting and Question Time

Officers reported on key activities during the course of their terms and took questions from the floor.

### **5.1) Zac Sheppard, York Sport President**

Zac highlighted his achievements from the year stating that while the home Roses win, and wider project was a key success, he was especially proud of the community aspects of this project including the fundraising effort, the underpinning campaign to raise awareness of eating disorders and mental health, and the family friendly festival that saw local clubs and teams host sports sessions for locals. In addition, he highlighted College Varsity, taking more students than ever to Durham, and his work on This Girl Can Week, focussing on women's sport.

### **5.2) James Durcan, Union President**

James opened by stating that the recruitment of a new VC had been a priority. Reflecting on the strategic importance of the appointment, he said he had been pleased to be able to be so heavily involved in the process. Alongside this, he was proud of his work with James Hare on hidden course costs and his work with Steph Hayle on rents. He had pushed the University to be more open on communications and transparent on future plans, for example, on estates development.

### **5.3) Steph Hayle, Community and Wellbeing Officer**

Steph presented on her key highlights for the year to date including: setting up the University's first web pages to support trans and non-binary students; undertaking an accessibility review and signage survey with the Estates Department; undertaking a review of buses and public transport in York; restructuring the scholarship programme; working with Unity Health to establish the Patient Participation Group following the CQC inspection; sorting out the University's virtual mental health hub; establishing a partnership programme for the Union on mental health with Student Minds; and finally her work on 'rent rant' addressing the cost and quality issues with University accommodation.

### **5.4) Finn Judge, Activities Officer**

Finn stated his key success was the pilot of Activities Access Grant; hundreds of students had benefitted from the funding and he hoped to expand the programme with an additional £5k for the next academic year. He added he was also proud of work on the Awards season, ensuring more students than ever were recognised for their achievements, and his lobbying on behalf of student groups. While issues with access to performance space were not resolved he had been able to secure £5k funding to support groups to access performance and training space off campus. In addition, he had completed the review of the Media Charter, and finally, worked hard to support RAG and Volunteering, raising the profile of student volunteers.

### **5.5) James Hare, Academic Officer**

James stated work on lecture capture was complete, it was now available across campus. In addition, he was proud of work on hidden costs; he highlighted successes including securing free dissertation printing for all students, support with laundry costs for health scientists, and lab coat costs for biologists. On funding, he had also supported the DSN to access additional support and secured a commitment from the University to support students on years abroad in the event of a no deal Brexit. He was continuing to work to secure study spaces in every academic department and supporting a review of exceptional circumstances, a new policy would be introduced in the new academic year.

### **5.6) Open Questions**

The Chair invited questions:

- Officers were asked about their understanding of plans for Erasmus funding. James Hare responded that this would be something for the new team to monitor closely in the light of Brexit developments given how important student support was for students studying abroad.
- Steph Hayle was asked about lack of transparency in relation to accommodation pricing and poor Officer communications. She responded that she felt consecutive Officer teams had tried to address this, citing the previous team's Christmas Card to the University as a very public statement yet she felt she had had some success with communications with the 'rent rant' campaign because it was an issue everyone could get behind. Additionally, she had restructured the 'Sabbs in Short' weekly newsletter which she felt had helped improve communications.
- Officers were asked for specific examples of student feedback that they had acted on. JD responded that working with student communities had been a key theme for the team's year, he cited the cross-campus venue refurbishment work noting how the team had worked closely with students to meet their needs. SH added that the student-led York Community Consultants had been commissioned to lead the consultation project for the venue review, ensuring students were front and centre of the project from the outset.
- Questions followed on the accessibility of venues, including the Lounge, and opening plans for the Lounge for the next academic year. FJ responded that officers felt the decision to use the Lounge in a more flexible way to support broad student activity was the right one, reflecting on the success of recent events such as the 'Stars' and 'York does Strictly'. JD encouraged students to keep feeding back comments and questions to the Union's Commercial Services team.
- A student asked about progress with accessible menus; Steph Hayle responded that these had been available but unfortunately had been stolen. New menus were being reprinted and would be retained behind venue bars to limit this problem in future.
- Officers were asked about progress on tackling antisemitism and racism. JD stated he took addressing issues of racism and antisemitism seriously. Over the year his team had worked closely with members of the student community including JSoc. Alongside this they had delivered a programme of activity to encourage dialogue amongst students and help confront these issues, this included the Holocaust Memorial Day event with Marlon Solomon.

## 6) Campus Development

The Chair welcomed Liz Gatheral, Director of Estates Development at the University of York noting that Officers were keen to invite the Estates team because their work is so critical to improving and advancing the student experience at the University.

Liz presented on future projects and current building works, setting out the principles for development and the University's vision for future developments.

The presentation is [available here](#).

## 7) NUS - Turnaround update

The Chair welcomed Peter Robertson, NUS Acting Chief Executive and Emily Chapman, National Officer (VP for Further Education). Peter and Emily gave a progress update on the NUS' reform proposals, key policy activity and outcomes from the most recent conference.

The NUS presentation is [available here](#).