

Minutes of: Arts SU Board of Trustees
Location: Online
Date and Time: 4pm, Tuesday 21st November 2023
Members: Minna Ellis (Chair), Lexa Barbulesca, Dawn Buchanan, Daniela Commey, Qingbo Du, Richard Mead, Emma Mottram, Katwamba Mutale
Apologies: Alyshia Carmen-Jack, Sof Nasif-Whitestone, Daryl Stenvoll-Wells,
In attendance: Yemi Gbajobi, Chief Executive; Martin Dodd, Head of Policy, Representation and Advocacy; Natasha Etti, Finance Manager (except item 8).
Auditors: Shoiab Arshad, Knox Cropper LLP (items 6-8)

Initial Items	
1.	The board noted apologies. It was noted that staff and officers had interests in the staff policies but it was decided that all members could stay for these items.
2.	The board approved the minutes of the last Trustee Board
3.	The board noted the progress of actions arising from the last Trustee Board Meeting a) The appointment of the deputy chair was still be decided b) The risk register was circulated.
4.	The board noted that the Chair had responded to a student society complaint on behalf of the board.
5.	The board noted the subcommittee minutes
Audit Items	
6.	To approve the Audited Accounts and Trustees Annual Report a) The Trustees noted their responsibilities for the Audit. The Auditors had no concerns about the way in which the finances had been recorded or reported. b) Last year the union had an income of £4.08M and spent £4.06M on activities for students. c) The reserves level was £460k against a target of £300k
7.	To note the Audit report and sign the letter of representation a) Knox Cropper had issued an unqualified audit opinion and found no fraud or areas of non-compliance. There were no unadjusted errors in the accounts. b) The space grant from the university may not reflect actual costs but this would not impact the material position of the union. c) An updated version of the accounts and letter should be circulated to trustees. Action: NE Staff members left the meeting for the next item.
8.	There was a Trustee meeting with auditors and without staff where no issues on the process were raised.
Standard Items	
9.	The board noted a CEO report a) Welcome week had been a priority and been very successful but meant that more operational work was undertaken rather than strategic by SLT. b) Staffing issues had needed a lot of attention as staff members changed roles and fixed term contracts completed.

	c) A skills audit of trustees would be carried out in the coming months and an April date would be found to have an away day. Action: YG / NS d) The quarterly KPI update would be sent around to Trustees though many were on target. Action: YG e) The SU continued working with social justice collective and were coming to the end of the audit and discovery phase of the review with focus groups and interviews being completed. It was hoped that the report would come to the next Trustee Board.
10.	The board noted the management accounts a) £82,000 surplus against a target of £46,000 as a result of vacancy savings but this was mainly due to phasing as higher number of student staff were recruited in line with the strategy b) Welcome week had been better than expected partly due to a conservative budget for income as well as the hard work of the venues team during this time. Students were buying a smaller number of items but buying higher priced merchandise. This had led to an £3,500 increase in income. c) Cost of sales were increasing as a result of inflation and cost of living but purchases were made through the purchasing consortium which offered benefits in terms of ethical monitoring. d) The SU received a small income from NUS "Totum" cards but it was not felt it was worth spending money on promotion at this stage.
11.	The board approved a Data retention policy which had been to the staffing and strategy committee and was updated for legal compliance.
12.	The board approved a recruitment and selection policy a) This had been discussed with the Trade Union following the strategy and staffing committee. b) The board considered having an internal recruitment for empty posts before external recruitment but this would limit the ability for the SU to appeal to a more diverse pool of candidates in terms of protected characteristics. Internal candidates would be given a guaranteed interview which meant a larger number of interviews than usual could be setup for some roles. c) Options to include non-managers on recruitment panels to give them developmental experience was now in the policy but this was not included as a matter of course.
13.	The board approved a employee privacy policy
14.	The board approved a 4 day working week policy in July and August. a) The SU would still be open 5 days a week for reception and senior staff but other teams would be able to have flexibility on when people were available. b) Board members considered if this could a year round situation but did not believe it was achievable without significant impact on capacity for students.
15.	The board approved a subsistence policy as recommended by the Audit subcommittee. a) Trustees believed this would help support staff and officers during the cost of living crisis and included initiatives such as paying for staff railcards.
16.	The board noted a by-election report a) Staff members were thanked for their excellent work in this area.
17.	The board noted a set of policies passed.
	Closed Items
15.	There was a Trustee Only Discussion

Upcoming meetings:

- Thursday 22/02/2024, Tuesday 02/04/24, Wednesday 18/06/2024

Closed Minutes of: Arts SU Board of Trustees

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	Closed Items
18.	The board noted a CEO report a) As the Deputy CEO was not returning from maternity the SLT had considered what next steps would be and decided that investment in the wider staffing structure would be better for the organisation than replacing this staff member and would helpfully challenge staff at different levels to take on responsibilities. b) A new proposal meant an additional manager in the Membership Services directorate to split democracy and representation to improve capacity for supporting education quality staff and officers. It was not expected that significant training costs would be needed for new roles. c) Additional capacity for the improved course representative provision would need additional costs from the university – including support within areas such as finance. d) The board noted the outcome of a student complaint. A society had lost access to their student media account and it was being used by a national student organisation. Responding to a written query from Daryl Stenvoll-Wells it was noted that the language used had different perspectives and the intention of its use was investigated to come to the conclusion. e) There would be an update to policies to strengthen the control of social media use and ownership. The Instagram access for this particular society had been retrieved. f) While engaging with different organisations views on language use or complaints ultimately Arts SU would need to come to their own conclusion. g) This was an example of how complicated the Freedom of Speech legislation could be for students' unions. This complaint was not contrary to any laws even if it did cause offense.