



UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON
STUDENTS' UNION

UWLSU Trustee Board

Meeting of 8th April 2020, 11:00, Zoom meeting

MEMBERSHIP: Jacob Pepper (Chair) (JPe), Janine Braithwaite (JB), Ancha Joof (AJ), Andrea Miller (AM), Anthony Coad (AC), Helen Dawit (HD) Stella Webb (SW)

SMT: Tye McMahon (TM), Matthew Myles-Brown (MMB), Amy Eden (AE)

IN ATTENDANCE: Vanessa Dankyi (VD),

APOLOGIES: Amy Eden (AE)

Minutes of Trustee Board

1. Introduction

1.1. This meeting was organised after the cancellation of the Trustee Board on 18/03/2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to many organisations being closed or work place practices having to be adapted. If people can work from home this has been implemented across the country.

1.2. The COVID-19 crisis is expected to wipe out 6.7 per cent of working hours globally in the second quarter of 2020 – equivalent to 195 million full-time workers.

1.3. In these exceptional circumstances Tye chaired the meeting.

1.4. Due to the unrepresented nature of the current national situation this board based the discussion on how our institution will manage during the Covid-19 pandemic

2. How the SU plans to carry out its core purposes and activities with particular relevance to the crisis. That includes students' academic experiences and completion of studies, their health, housing, finances and hardship, mental wellbeing and community and association.

2.1. The group were keen to hear how students are generally finding online learning/teaching. The feedback has been on a whole positive. Previously some UWL staff had been reluctant to do online lectures however this is a sector wide issue.

2.2. Students are concerned with extensions. MMB stated that the university has agreed to a two-week extension for all assessment or assignment dates by two weeks. The communication is yet to go out to students, but it should be sent out by the end of this week.

2.3. Emergency regulations are currently being formalised. New regulations are to be published next week. This should help students. However, these emergency regulations might not be relevant to nurses. Nurses work is regulated by numerous bodies.

2.4. The SU is doing all it can to help students continue with their studies by providing information and working closely with UWL departments. The SU provide academic advice not hardship advice. The Student Services team are responsible for the hardship fund. Potentially at least 20% of students could fulfil the hardship fund criteria. The SU are liaising with Student Services to get the criteria which students need to fulfil to be eligible for the hardship fund.

2.5. The current situation is financially stressful for a lot of people including students. Students who were struggling financially before the Covid-19 outbreak might have added financial burdens eg loss of jobs etc. NUS is demanding that the government acts to reassure students and remove housing anxieties now.

2.6. The NUS' five key demands for government, regarding student renters are:

- Ensure all tenants and landlords have access to clear and holistic public health advice.
- Every student landlord must offer a no-penalty release from tenancy contracts for the current and next academic year.
- Government must ban all evictions, for all renters, for the duration of the crisis.
- Government must ensure that renters who are financially impacted by the Coronavirus have their forthcoming rents subsidised, significantly reduced or waived entirely for 3 months – with the option to renew if needed.
- Government must enact a universal freeze on all rent increases for the next 12 months.

2.7. However, these demands are voluntary. NUS are looking to universities and the private sector Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) providers and landlords to implement all of these demands voluntarily with immediate effect and implement the current government advice on the coronavirus pandemic.

2.8. We will have to wait to see how the government and institutions implement this guidance.

2.9. Nursing students are a concern. Some UWL nursing students and staff members have been called to work for the NHS during this pandemic and are doing so. CNMH has two school reps who are very active and have stayed connected with Course Reps. JB has connections with some staff and students in the CNMH school.

2.10. JB will be recording a message of support for students.

3. With regards to SU staff, the plans to redirect work to support the above, also the health and mental well-being of staff

3.1. Our staff have been brilliant at responding to the needs of our members during this period of unprecedented change. They have developed new and innovative methods of working with each other and students to develop some excellent ideas and maintain service levels where possible

3.2. Overall our staff team are feeling okay, but some staff are dealing with difficult personal life matters alongside work.

3.3. With the new pieces of work that the SU are delivering the group were keen to discuss if we have enough staff to deliver the work. At the moment the SU has enough staff to deliver the work that needs to be done.

4. A brief on the financial impact of the crisis, a financial forecast - including and analysis of the availability of Government support and the use of reserves

4.1. Furloughing has been introduced by the government to prevent mass unemployment. Furloughing will temporarily help pay the wages of people who can't do their jobs, to help companies retain them. Being furloughed means employees are kept on the payroll, even though they aren't working.

4.2. Businesses can claim 80% of their employees' wages from the government, up to a maximum of £2,500 per person, per month before tax.

4.3. UWLSU is eligible to furlough staff. Due to the closure of the institution some roles cannot do their jobs eg Commercial team. The Commercial team staff members work in the bar and café.

We are currently looking into furloughing:

- All commercial crew (Student Staff)
- All gym crew (Student Staff)
- All events Crew (Student Staff)
- Two Commercial Coordinators (Support Staff)

4.4. In the process of furloughing staff, the SMT team must be certain that too many staff are not furloughed. When staff are furloughed they cannot work. The SMT team are confident that thorough enough analysis has been conducted in the process of furloughing.

4.5. Some staff are struggling to combine work commitments with personal commitments. A number of our staff members are parents – all children are now at home full time. Other staff have other personal commitments / worries. It is anticipated that a few SU staff members might volunteer to be furloughed. The SU will deal with requests on a case by case basis.

4.6. The Financial Summary of having a forecasted surplus based on taking advantage of furloughed staff HMRC recovery is £119,454. The figure includes UWL fulfilling its financial commitments in relation to the outstanding gym costs (circa £45k).

4.7. AM was keen to review more granular information regarding UWLSU's finance's. The group would like to see the figures for different areas of the business.

4.8. In situations like this extra pressure can be placed on Finance teams in any organisation. The group wanted to ascertain if the Finance team have the capacity to deal with the increased workload. The group were assured that the Finance team can cope with the extra demands.

4.9. SAGE is the main accountancy software the SU Finance team use. The SU Finance team have been unable to access the SAGE software since the two recent cyber-attacks on the UWL IT systems. The UWL IT team are aware of the issue and the SU are chasing them to sort of the issue.

4.10. Actions

- TM – Provide a more detailed report on the current Finance of the SU

5. A risk register and discussion about the next 3, 6 and 12 month horizon planning

5.1. TM gave a brief overview of the Risk Register. UWLSU have implemented processes to minimise the risk to the organisation.

5.2. The group were confident that everything had been examined in the Risk register.

5.3. AM stated that it would be great to see a more detailed register of risk in relation to the current situation in the UK and how this is affecting the SU.

5.4. Actions

- TM – Produce a more detailed risk register and email this to Trustees

6. Any other business

6.1. The group were concerned with the two major cyber-attacks that had occurred on the UWL IT systems. The group were keen to know if the IT systems are robust. It appears that our IT systems are on the same level as other institutions but more thorough investigation needs to be done. Other institutions have had cyber-attacks too so this is a national issue and not an isolated event. The SU has IT systems which interface with UWL IT systems such as MSL. Other SU systems like Advice Pro do not interface with the UWL IT system.

6.2. The group were keen to discuss the relationship between UWL and UWLSU during this crisis. At first UWL were not liaising with the SU about their decisions but now UWLSU are more involved in decision TM and the SABBS have been communicating regularly. The lack of involvement would not have been intentional.

6.3. TM wanted to ensure that Trustees are kept updated on developments in the organisation. The group agreed that future Trustee meetings should go ahead as scheduled. The Trustees are happy to be updated of key things via email and decisions can be confirmed via email.

6.4. Resources/Newsletters which are beneficial to read are HEPI and WONKE.

6.5. Actions

- TM – To liaise with the IT regarding how robust and secure our IT systems are.
- MMB – To seek assurance that the SU IT systems which interface with UWL IT systems are not compromised when/if cyber-attacks happen.
- TM – Send regular email updates of what is going on with the organisation during the Covid-19 pandemic to Trustees.

7. Summary of actions

- TM – Provide a more detailed report on the current Finance of the SU
- TM – Produce a more detailed risk register and email this to Trustees
- TM – To liaise with the IT regarding how robust and secure our IT systems are.
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