

## **Draft Laws Working Group**

**Monday 26<sup>th</sup> Jan**

**LRR**

**15:15 – 16:15**

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Elise Bateman (EB), RoMo (RM), Jonathan Moore (JM), Trinity Gortschacher (TG), Justin Goldberg (JG), Cecilia Kirchner (CK), Emma Hughes (EH), Jacob Carey (JC), Cam Brown (CB), Holly McDonald (HMc)

#### **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Everyone introduced themselves and their roles.

#### **2. Timeline of Working Group**

EB flagged this work would need to be concluded by 8<sup>th</sup> June at ASF, though it could be brought to an earlier meeting if we complete our edits more quickly.

#### **3. Frequency of Meetings**

JG proposed monthly meetings of this group, which was met with no dissent or alternatives.

#### **4. Representative Roles for Elections**

EB asked the group if the current roles that are up for election are fit for purpose.

CB asked if any of the current convenors have raised if they'd prefer to move to an elected officer, or vice versa.

EH indicated that they would prefer the SVS convenor role to be interviewed at the next cycle, or at least asking prospective candidates their preference given that this would be a significant change.

EB noted that being elected gives greater capacity to feed into the Union relative to being appointed.

JC suggested that those overseeing a group that would have a significant change should be looked at. Likewise, they stated that Officers without a Network may have difficulties being elected, so they suggested asking the current officer if they'd prefer election or appointment.

EH asked if the Employability Officer should continue in its current form. JC responded in their capacity as a former Employability Officer, stating their view that the role didn't set well within the Union as it doesn't have an accompanying plan/strategy, though it's worth having someone involved to connect with the University on this remit (be that staff or officer).

JC also advised that Officers should have clear role descriptions including who they're line managed by, and general expectations. EH asked if there was a possibility of creating redacted handover documents possibility in advance of elections. This would then ensure that information is shared with staff so that everyone has enough knowledge.

CB and RM referenced RM's project of a standardised handover.

JC suggested there should be improved guidance around what Exec Officer roles involve and who they oversee.

JG noted that in their view, some Networks don't necessarily fit within the Executive and Forum they have been assigned, or this could be clarified further to find out where officers/Networks wish to situate themselves.

JC suggested greater flexibility, with Networks possibly attending two Forums if remit works so as not to 'pigeon-hole.' EH flagged that this could increase workload which would be less attractive. JC counter-suggested that just seeing the minutes from the other Forum as necessary (rather than needing to attend the one Forum).

EB agreed that flexibility of attendance/involvement would be of benefit.

A question was raised if each Officer should be overseen by an Exec Officer, and to alleviate some strain from the Exec and ensure efficiency.

EB confirmed yes, and that for example the Disability Officer would naturally feed into the PresWell.

A note was raised by a member that in their experience, the University only recognises some representation positions so there was a question as to which roles are recognised by the University (alongside that we recognise these internally).

EB flagged the Reimagining Representation project, so officers could in theory go to other committees where remit allows. This will also reduce the overworking of officers who tend to be called upon consistently.

JC said broadening out is helpful, though those in vice roles could also act as a delegate and step up where needed. In previous standing orders, this was recognised in terms of chairing committees (in the Socs space).

JG and JC re-raised the clarity in terms of role descriptions for officer roles, along with which staff officers might expect to work with.

JC suggested that elections guidance could be clarified further in terms of definitions. JC advocated for the return of debates, particularly for those candidates who are unknown.

CB noted that the draft Elections Law mentioned proposers and seconders which is a new addition, and previously it's been self-nominations. CB advocated that removing this will remove the notion of a 'popularity contest.' EB agreed.

EB asked the group how many hours representation Officers should be doing as baseline in their volunteering.

EH and TG said it's difficult to standardise across roles. TG said people tend to care too much, so guidelines won't prevent them from going above this. TG noted the dependence on volunteers in order for things to be achieved. TG suggested deputy/vice role may be better than placing a ceiling or guidance on hours, and that it's worth speaking to others before making a firm decision.

EH said that officers they are familiar with would suggest they've done many more hours, and that we should contact past officers on how many hours they spent roughly, and how many they feel they ought to have done.

JC said hours should be looked at, but it's not an ideal measure as sometimes higher hours indicates that Officers find the activity fun (as opposed to onerous). TG suggested it's not about overwork as such, but more about how much support the officer required.

EB wants to look at hours so that volunteering doesn't overbalance studies, whilst recognising that volunteering is important to students and their development.

JC suggested that we work with students on balance, rather than the number of hours. JG suggested it's balance as well as the level of support (e.g. a large and functioning Network to spread workload, vs smaller Networks or solo officers). JC suggested letting others on the Network step forward to pick things up when deadlines hit etc. TG noted that some committee roles are elected too within that committee, so there is a degree of democratic mandate in those roles too (though some are interviewed for competency), and everyone follows the mandate of the officer who was elected overall.

CB flagged the feedback from ex-or current officers and asked about the timeline for this feedback relative to Elections. EB responded we'd have this feedback before opening nominations so there is time to take action.

JC suggested creating a spreadsheet of feedback, and that we will need a large enough sample size.

EB summarised the discussion thus far as being largely about clarity of role descriptions and where roles should sit.

JC asked what staff/the Union feels about certain roles.

EB feels we have a lot of officers, potentially too many, but would refrain from taking a wholesale decision and needs longer to see the full value of the roles.

CB noted that in the Democracy Review, the SRC was broken up as a lot of officers were formerly doing operational tasks which are now taken up by staff, and it was too many officers within one forum. CB posited that there is scope to look at duplication in remits to see whether there is a need for the roles we currently have.

EB seeks to alleviate volunteer pressure, so their efforts are not the only people doing those given pieces of work.

JC suggested creation of a volunteering policy, EB agreed (and/or volunteering agreement between staff and volunteers). JC noted the general code of conduct on the website.

CB suggested there should be some bare bones of this from previous work on People Strategy (HMc agreed). CB also suggested there ought to be something in past documents about reward and recognition of volunteers.

TG asked if reward and recognition of volunteers was the purpose of OUA, CB agreed, with OUA being the one significant event where we give this recognition.

## 5. Who will be working on which section(s) of the Laws

JG: Affiliated socs and networks

JC: Union Executive and affiliated socs if needed

CB: Forums & Executives, Association reps, or wherever needed

CB raised that the Union Exec section as this may need to be approved by Board given their status as employees. EB agreed, and that overall, it will have to go to Board after ASF anyway. JC wondered if giving relevant parts of Laws to specialist forums for feedback would help, and EB agreed.

TG: Association representation officers, Union Executive, and Elections

CB noted some convenors are in the Representation Officers Law, so wondered if these should be split.

JC stated that remits in old laws were pretty accurate, asked if we could get access to the old copy

CB suggested we could edit the Laws to link to separate JDs. EB suggested linking to the standing order for individual officers as separate (so as not to need to change the Laws repeatedly)

JC said that other documents including standing orders will need work

CK: Elections. Member Code of Conduct

JM: elected officer recall

CB has some notes from previous drafts which they would send this over

EH: Networks and socs

JC asked how the Elections Team will work this year. EB confirmed that the Elections Team will be staff-based this year, with CEO as Deputy Returning Officer and they are looking for an external Returning Officer.

AB - Referenda

## **6. Any Feedback received from students**

EB said there was little feedback from students at the time, though one student raised points from tightening language, and balance of power between officers.

JC asked to clarify what our actions need to be by next meeting.

EB replied that we would need suggestions, background info or consultation with students and forums. We will repeat this process until completion of redrafting.

### **Scheduling of this group**

After discussion, it was agreed that we should meet on Mondays or Tuesdays with different times for flexibility (Fridays to be avoided entirely). EB will look to book meetings for w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

There was a short discussion about the need to finish the Elections Law in time for Elections. Everyone could be involved in this as none stated they sought to run for office.

**Actions:**

Action	Responsible parties	Status
Redraft and/or consult with relevant groups	ALL	Ongoing
Create Teams site	HMc	Complete
Develop Volunteering Policy & Agreement	HMc with EB	In progress