

AGENDA 26 FEBRUARY 2025

1. Introduction and welcome from Chair (Charlie Skinner) and approval of minutes
 1. Actions from previous meeting
 2. Approval of minutes from last meeting
2. President Reports;
 1. Canterbury - Verbal, not submitted
 2. Farnham - Verbal, not submitted
3. Campus Officer Reports
 1. Canterbury
 2. Epsom – Verbal, not submitted
 3. Farnham – Verbal, not submitted
4. Motions and Ideas
 1. AI Motion
5. Budget
 1. Proposals - none submitted
 2. Tracking - none submitted
6. AOB

1.2 MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

In attendance: Charlie Skinner, Maddy Truin, Quinn Walker, Runchen Li, Shayaike Hassan, Alex Kosierkiewitz, Cassie De St Croix, Josh Singh-Hill

1. Minute From Last Meeting
 - Approved
 - Cassie requested a few changes due to grammar or spelling errors
2. Actions from Previous Meeting:
 - Cassie's actions have not been completed, as they have been on leave for the majority of time since the last meeting.
3. President Report
 - 3.1. Cassie's Report (Verbal)
 - Appeals Board- very successful, nice to overturn decisions, some common themes with reasonings.
 - Meeting with Martin Dodd (Chair of trustees) and Kyley Winfield, (CEO) and probationary period and goals. Kyley is being held to account and is keeping to targets.

- Cost of Living Committee has been dissolved and absorbed by the Partnerships committee. This is not a move SU is happy with and it feels like UCA is absolving responsibility for students. Cassie and Charlie will have a conversation in the future.

3.2. Charlies Report (Available in Agenda)

- Farnham has had some Union Visibility Activity
- SU worked with Nandos to give students early access
 - Free sketchbooks and paintbrushes
- Coole Insight's Festival of Training
- Stock Checked the Art Shops
- Meetings:
 - Senior Leadership Meetings
 - MYU Fair Planning
 - Retention Task and Finishing Group
 - Focus on student finance and how the University can help
- Campaigns Updates
 - Foodbanks: WWO: 3 campuses publicised and explained how the process happened. Flyering and posters to follow.
 - Union Visibility: Talked to Graham from Open Days Team about SU visibility and 'pre-education'. Now sits on the strategic group for Open Days
- Chatted with Sarah Clarke about Easter Break provisions

Cassie commented about the Campaigns budget and spending over £50 requiring unanimous approval from Presidents. Needs to be a bigger conversation now that there is only two presidents. Suggests Union Council Approval.

4. Campus Officer Reports

4.1. Farnham

4.1.1. Maddy

- Course reps for film are still not recognised as course reps by the Union. Lecturers communications are also not clear.
 - Conflicting conversations with Union and Lecturers
 - Lecturers are not clear with students about how the processes work, but have been given clear instructions from the Engagement Manager
- Film Course dissertation has been moved to January, used to be April.
- A student has been struggling to get in contact with the Union. Maddy is going to tell them to contact Cassie.

4.2. Canterbury

4.2.1. Quinn (Written Report available)

- Issues raised from Fine Art last semester have not yet been actioned, but will keep Quinn in the loop when they have more details
- Progress with extension of studio hours. Petitioning students to agree to the change- 35 signatures so far, continuing to lobby. Will seek Union help if needed.

- Is an ambassador of the University, who represents the Union, however, the University wants to expand on this. Lots of work being done to improve and diversify Open days such as a festival and welcome talks. Open to advice surrounding this.

Cassie notes that in this circumstance, there may need to be a wider conversation including Robyn from Marketing and other staff in terms of the Unions identity. ACTION To explore having a meeting between Quinn, Cassie, Robyn and University Outreach Team

Wider conversation between all Canterbury Officers about action plans, keeping an eye on Course Rep meetings and ensuring people enact feedback.

4.2.2. Josh

- Course Reps have not been meeting up much, but they are working on trying to better communication and attendance.
- Students being asked to do jobs in the place of maintenance without adequate training. Using sealant and paint and sanding- wasn't communicated whether or not this was safe or non-toxic.
- Scaffolding in the lounge from maintenance, SU not made aware, societies not sure if they could use the space.

4.3. Epsom

4.3.1. Runchen

- Been attending lots of meetings and events at the campus, students have been welcoming.
- We should do more things to engage students and diversify activities available to them. Especially in evenings.
- Students from demanding courses are having issues with social activity.
- Attended an open day
- Food could be better quality

4.4. Motions and Ideas

- UCA staff pride network meeting
- UCA recommended to come off of X platform due to their new policies
- Meta no longer protects hate speech, UCA and UCASU use Instagram a lot for outreach, which questions the potential increase in hate crimes.
- Quinn working on a motion to prevent AI imagery within the Union
- A student in a society used AI recently
- If any other campuses have opinions, please let them know.
- Animation students complain about the use of AI in projects.

4.5. Budget

- No tracking
- No submissions

4.6. AOB

5. Bye-laws are being rewritten, Union Council will need to approve before going to the Board. If anyone wants to contribute, let Taylor Kane know by 17/01.

CANTERBURY CAMPUS OFFICER REPORT

SUMMARY

It's been a good start to the year. January Freshers seem to be settling in nicely and society engagement has gone up since November. There have been lots of proposals for Society-led events that non-members can engage with which should provide a positive boost to the social scene. I've been in discussion with a variety of students about how we can best represent their interests, and what they'd like to see more of. Elections are also coming up soon and it's been exciting to see buzz from newer students who are interested in getting more involved with the Union.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

1. The VisCom course board was largely uneventful. There has been some discussion around setting up meetings with students to consult about the course rewrite that'll be taking place over the summer. It's good to see that staff are looking for student input. Fine Art also had a similar set of meetings when their course was selected for a rewrite.
2. Overall, it seems that student feedback is being communicated well between the reps and their peers.
3. A few people noted that once again, course rep sign-ups aren't being communicated as clearly as they could be. Only two people attended the recent online training as they weren't told when it would take place except for in the What's On email. We have a Forum coming up so if at all possible it would be beneficial to make sure an invite/email goes around to all of the reps.
4. There was pretty significant pushback after a society used Generative AI to produce art for an exhibition poster. In response to this feedback, I have drafted a motion to propose the implementation of a policy that prohibits the use of Generative AI tools.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Meet Your Union took place in January. Unfortunately, I was away so I can't speak to how it was received but it looked like it went well.
2. It's been nice to see students engaging with See U Next Tuesday!

3. We're seeing lots of new societies and clubs pop up. There have also been conversations between Hannah, the SU events manager, and Canterbury Socs about collaborative events similar to those run in Farnham i.e. Sip and Paint, Games Night, etc.
4. Planning has started for the Union Awards. I've been pushing the survey to as many students as possible.

CAMPAIGNS AND PROJECTS

No Updates.

4.1 AI MOTION

UCASU's Stance Against Generative AI

Proposer Name: Quinn Walker

Seconder Name: Cassie de St. Croix

We note that:

1. There is currently no policy regarding the use of Generative AI within the Students Union.
2. There has been widespread concern/outcry from students on the Canterbury campus about the use of AI software by other students, the SU, and the university at large.
 - a. Recently, one of our societies used Generative AI to create promotional materials for an upcoming exhibition. This resulted in both direct complaints to the Union and the launch of a student-led poster campaign condemning the use of Generative AI.
 - i. There was no policy in place that stated the society could not use AI-generated images, which meant the Union could not/did not need to take action.
 - ii. The student poster campaign came as a direct result of this. It is also likely that the AI-generated posters came about as a result of unclear guidance on the use of Generative AI, highlighting the need to implement policy.
3. We acknowledge the difference between 'Narrow/Traditional AI' and 'Generative AI.' This motion pertains specifically to Generative AI, as defined below.
 - a. Generative AI uses large datasets through deep neural networks of existing data and can create new content based on patterns it 'learns' from this data. It can respond to prompts, and generate new content, such as text, images, audio, moving images, and software code. Examples include ChatGPT and Midjourney.
 - b. Traditional/Narrow AI refers to systems that can perform tasks in response to specific inputs and can use and analyze data to make decisions/predictions. Examples include Alexa, Siri, and Google's search algorithms.
4. There are a number of concerns pertaining to Generative AI, ranging from how these image generators are trained, to the significant environmental impact they have.
 - a. AI models require significant amounts of energy and resources to function. "According to OpenAI researchers, since 2012, the amount of computing power required to train cutting-edge

AI models has doubled every 3.4 months. By 2040, it is expected that the emissions from the ICT industry as a whole will reach 14% of the global emissions.”

b. There are ethical implications relating to the infringement of intellectual property that occurs when these generators are trained. Artists are not generally asked for consent when their work is used to train AI image generators, and it is highly unlikely that if their work is used unlawfully any action will be taken against the companies that do this.

c. It is unclear as to who ‘authors/creates’ AI-generated images/text. The AI engine cannot take ownership of its generated works, as it does not have the capacity to perform critical thinking/analysis. Likewise, the person who writes the prompt that generates the work does not have any entitlement to ‘ownership’ of the work, as they did not create it.

We believe that:

1. The use of AI within a creative institution as a substitute for manmade work directly devalues the work of creative practitioners. As a Union operating on behalf of art students, we should be taking a decisive stance to protect the integrity of student work.
2. The past few years have seen an agenda from Conservatives against so-called ‘Mickey-Mouse Degrees’ (i.e. arts, humanities, etc.) The advancement of Generative AI threatens to bolster the argument against Arts as a ‘useful degree.’ If the practice of art itself continues to be devalued by AI advancements, we could see a reduction in financial support for Arts education.
3. By demonstrating a commitment to platforming student work, we will enhance trust between the Union and its members.
4. A decisive stance on AI within our policies will also ensure students can raise grievances through the appropriate means and see action taken in response to breaches of this policy.
5. Implementing guidance and policy will give more clarity to UCASU staff/volunteers on how they can/cannot use AI.

We resolve that:

1. Further research be completed into individual campus opinions on AI.
2. Should the research display student distrust/rejection towards the use of Generative AI systems, the Union will resolve to create a policy that prohibits and/or prevents the use of Generative AI systems within all materials created by UCASU & UCASU Clubs and Societies.
3. UCASU should show commitment to transparency in the meantime by labeling any AI-generated content used within marketing/promotional material and communications.

Resolutions cost:

At present, there should be minimal/no cost to implementing this motion.