

Emergency exec meeting - 18 April 2019

Attendees: VP Kent Riley Clowes (R), President Marta Szurmiej (M), VP Surrey Simone Ziel (S), Canterbury Exec Andrew Pantling (A), School Rep Cami Burn (C), School Rep Priscilla Cailleau (P), Canterbury Exec Lou Hardy (L), Rochester Exec Pip Harris (PH), Rochester Exec Nelly Lockett (N)

Minuter: Sophie Jackson, Head of Membership Engagement

Meeting purpose: To discuss and vote on VP Surrey's motion 'Save UCA Staff'

M - Communication from the chair to indicate that minuter not give their opinion or to speak during the meeting.

S - Introduces the motion, explaining the possible impact including staff job losses. S goes on to explain how journalism students approached the union with concerns about their course being made redundant. S expressed a feeling that students should be made aware of the cuts and that we should take a stance against cuts. S says that the petition has almost 1,500 signatures and that students and staff have been contacting her to offer their support to the petition. S says the purpose of the emergency motion is to set a Union action plan and to get support from exec for the motion.

M - does anyone have any questions to Simone regarding this so far?

N - says she has a number of questions but wanted to let others go first.

PH - is unsure of the specifics of the possible cuts. Also wanted to know what the action plan would entail, whether it would be about preventing the cuts or something else.

S - explaining how students were not informed of specifics of cuts, but staff have received an email with some vague information including the £3.5 million figure. S also says that after the petition was published, no specific demands were decided aside from delaying the consultation period to ensure staff and student involvement. The journalism students were hoping to stop cuts altogether but S said the priority was to delay the consultation period first.

R - was it mentioned in the petition about having an extended consultation period?

S - no.

R - if that's something that was discussed, why wasn't that mentioned as an outcome?

S - that was a mistake in terms of not being clear, it was agreed on Monday that there may need to be a further statement explaining possible demands. Rather than editing a petition with so many signatures.

R - asked what S means by “we” when talking about “what we want”

S - both, based on discussions with students and staff.

M - says it’s a political decision and so exec and sabbs should agree. And that neither have approved an action yet.

N - where has the number of jobs come from? N expresses concern that the number of jobs is alarming to students.

S - based on discussion with Head of Membership Engagement, came up with an estimate based on the outline given in business plan.

N - concerned that execs don’t know what the business plan entails and that it makes it hard to build a plan.

R - states that he sent the business plan to execs prior to meeting. He says that he had to write a letter to Alan due to receiving a last minute phone call. R apologises for the fact that execs weren’t consulted on the letter. R says he focused on staff-student ratio, no reduction to pastoral and learning care, consultation period extension, maximising recruitment. Explained that he had to rush it but it is going to share the response to it when it comes back.

N - apologises for not having seen this due to limited internet access.

R - states he wants everyone to have the most information possible.

P - says the last pages of the document claim there will be consultations, wants to know if there will be any consultations with students. Concerned that she was told by a staff member some of the workshops for their course may close.

R - says this is why the letter asked for a longer consultation period. He is working on an action plan going forward. *R made a statement to exec that he requested not be minuted.* R explains he has to leave shortly.

M - asks for permission to make some statements. She says the business case specifies which areas the money will be taken from and then outlines the ‘other cost’ savings from the business case document. M claims that this means the staff savings will not make up £3.5M.

R - states that the petition contains factual errors and that the Union should not offer support.

M - agrees.

N - asked if students or union started this petition.

S - explains that students started the petition but with support of herself and Head of Membership Engagement.

N - says the petition is highly emotive and that this is concerning. Says that the union needs to address the cuts but that the current petition may not be the most effective. Doesn't feel the petition sounds constructive and so may not be supported by the union.

PH - says it feels scaremongering.

L - agrees with points that have been raised and says that as a warden she has not had any confirmation of any of the facts relating to staff cuts. Says staff are scared by the number on the poster.

P - says in Epsom people are asking her about the cuts and she said she could not answer questions due to the confusing email sent to students. Says the union must be careful to only present facts.

M - thanks P for comments.

C - says she agrees with all comments. She says she's concerned that "restructuring" means staff loss. Says that there needs to be a staff-student ratio maintained and that she wants clarification.

R - said that the letter he has written seeks clarification on these issues. Also states that "restructure" may just mean that job shares become one person's role or other such arrangements that won't impact students. R says we will work on being able to react more appropriately to issues in future.

N - attempted to speak but lost internet.

R - asked M to carry on.

A - asks if the initial email to staff was confidential or general knowledge.

S - explains that it was not confidential and that herself and HoME confirmed this.

N - says this comes back to concerns from Rochester about how money is split amongst staff, in terms of leadership vs. lecturers etc. Wants to know what percentage of spending comes from leadership salaries.

R - says that he needs to leave and asks to vote now.

There is general discussion about whether voting should happen now and what the vote is for.

M - asks who is voting in favour of the motion.

[Unknown] - says if it means we can get closer to sorting it out then she will vote yes.

M - says she is unsure if voting needs to include amendments.

R - says no as no amendments have been submitted.

Minuter specified to R that an action plan would still need to be agreed if the motion is approved.

L - says amendments are needed as the statistics are broad but that she agrees with the points on the motion. Due to the phrasing of the petition she wants it to be rewritten.

M asked for a vote in favour. There is general discussion about some members wanting more time to understand or discuss the motion. R expresses that he has to leave urgently and urges for the vote to take place. M asks again for a vote.

No votes in favour.

8 votes against.

1 abstention.

M - says that the motion does not pass. M then says that it should be discussed that any petitions or open letters should be agreed by all sabbs and exec before being shared.

All members of the meeting agree with this.

R leaves the meeting due to having an appointment.

N - asks if there can be a discussion by email to decide on something they are happy with.

M - says they are still quorate.

N - says she needs to leave.

R - says that he will send out the response from Alan to the exec once it is received.

M - says that anyone can make further points if they wish.

N - returns to previous point about salaries. Feels that funding is being taken from student-facing roles but not leadership. Pointed out that M was in a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor where he was asked for this info and he refused it.

All in the meeting agree that there needs to be more transparency about where salary spending is done.

N - says students' money is being spent and they should know where it is going. She says students on their own aren't succeeding in getting this info so the union should pursue it.

M - says Marion Wilkes told her that this information is available online.

N - says that there is no information about salaries above senior lecturers. She said she went through accounts and undertook an FOI request but has not been successful. She said they told her the info couldn't be provided because of "auditors".

M - says when she is back in the office she will look over accounts and see what information she can provide.

M - explains that the university's commitments to student experience and the staff-student ratio are not just words, and that if they have committed to these in their business case they will follow through. *M made a statement to exec that she asked not be minuted.* M also explains that she feels changes along the lines of this business case have been ongoing and should not be a major concern. She states that they are pushing for more international recruitment because it supports the university's income.

M - states that the sabbatical team was not consulted about the date of this exec meeting and is upset because she is on a religious holiday.

S - says that she was told to organise this quickly but also that she didn't receive any requests to rearrange the meeting.

M - says that the meeting could've been arranged earlier to accommodate R's appointment.

S - says this should be discussed outside of the meeting.

L - says that R felt thrown into this situation and has worked hard on this issue.

S - says she is on annual leave and wasn't aware he was leaving earlier. Apologised for this.

M thanks everyone and closes the meeting.

Actions

- Discuss a further action plan by email.
- Seek information from the Leadership team about the salary split for roles that are more senior than Senior Lecturers.
- M to provide appropriate information from Board of Governors' accounts about UCA staff salaries.
- R to send out Alan Cooke (DVC) response letter to Exec once it is received.