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Emergency Union Progress Meeting (UPM)

1st November 2022

6:00pm – 8:00PM, Lecture Theatre F

18:09 - Elgin and Rishi introduce themselves and Rishi proposes that Love chairs this meeting since he signed the open letter. Vote being taken for this. 5 reject the motion, 13 pass the motion.

Agenda of the meeting starts, Henry gray soc sends their apologies for absence.

Elgin sent out email to all students and not to all societies, apologises for that as student asks if other societies were made aware of the UPM.

People being given a few minutes to read the minutes of the last UPM in October. Elgin gives a disclaimer about the sensitive nature of the discussions and says that anyone is allowed to have breaks as well.

Saleh recommends that the meeting be recorded, upon Norheen asking if meeting would be recorded and Elgin and Rishi say no, that they would rely on the minutes like they normally do. This is put to a vote, and 40 vote in favour of it being recorded. Agenda gotten back to.

Discussion points about the last UPM:

Questions raised towards why SU members of staff didn’t attend the UPM

Ayesha and Ogor reply, Ayesha says that she wasn’t feeling too well and left site at 11am. Ogor wasn’t obligated to attend the meeting as a fulltime member SU staff.

Ayesha addresses a point in the minutes of the last UPM about why open letter was addressed to the board of trustees, she says that it is to do with their reputation and so she has to take it up higher.

Ashley mentioned that other members of the SU exec didn’t know about the letter, so were not able to have the opportunity to sign the letter in an address to the minutes of last UPM.

Elgin makes a point that people not signing the letter doesn’t necessarily mean that they reject the motion, other students echo that and raise how important it is to stop miscommunication amongst the student body.

Saleh asked whether Elgin is here as an individual or as a VP officer. Elgin says VP officer

Ayesha addresses with the open statement from the SU, thanking pride soc for sending the letter and that this is a serious issue being investigated and opens a wider discussion.

Open letter being read and discussed. Students being given time to read open letter from pride soc and from SU and board of trustees.

Rishi opens the floor to both the SU and pride soc to raise any more issues regarding the open letter and any other points they want to raise that were not raised in the letter. Jack allows the SU to go first. SU has nothing, jack points out that there was a public reply to the open letter online.

Saleh asks why this wasn’t put amongst all the other responses in the document, jack says that it is just important that it was made aware.

Public response was read out, was posted on the 19th of October.

Liv raises that they as a society would like a form of allyship being shown by the SU if some members of the SU are not comfortable putting their pronouns.

Ayesha replies to show how the SU aim to showcase their allyship towards the LGBTQ+ community in St Georges. Mentions the use of Intersoc panels, putting on an open spaces conversation in collaboration with pride soc, SU will look into the pronouns policy,

Norheen opens the conversation regarding an email from freshers who highlighted that they felt uncomfortable being asked their pronouns and felt pressured.

Liv who was also one of the consent trainers highlights that this wasn’t done with malice but rather the opposite, also highlights the importance of making sure that students don’t feel pressurised from sharing their pronouns in spaces.

Anya was one of the consent trainers and made it clear that she made sure that students didn’t feel pressurised to highlight their pronouns.

George also highlighted that mentioning a person’s pronouns is a very normal practice in workplace settings in the wider community.

Natasha also highlights that the sharing of one’s pronouns was not compulsory but voluntarily and highlighted that the mentioning of introducing oneself with their pronouns was recommended by those who trained them. Priya also echoes that and highlights that a lot of thought and care was put into preparing the consent training materials

Student who attended the consent training also highlights the importance of introducing oneself with pronouns and how in her session, it was made clear that this was voluntary.

Ella on Microsoft teams, asks a question regarding what the alternative will be for not putting their pronouns. Elgin refers to the open letter from the SU and asks if there is any other alternative. SU make no comment. Liv asks if they will get an answer.

Ogor and Ayesha refer to the open letter from the SU, Rishi highlights that they do not need to give an answer if they are not ready to give one. SU agree and say that they will answer the question later.

KB asks a question what the allyship flag would be, Jack says the pride flag or the allyship flag which pride soc have that. KB also highlights that would a flag of allyship be used for every other cause or towards every other society.

Another student highlights this point as well. Liv mentions that there was an incident that made the members of the LGBTQ+ community in the university uncomfortable, hence why the LGBTQ+ allyship flag is being highlighted.

Shahzaib also says that it is unfair that pride soc are given the SU an ultimatum to either have an allyship flag or include their pronouns. Student says that is unfair if certain students beliefs are not being respected.

Caspian, one of the original creators of the consent training, restarter of the pride soc, explains the reason why the inclusion of the pronouns was included in consent training and in organizations, and how it shows solidarity towards the trans community and improve inclusivity. Highlights the importance of making sure everyone understands the importance of why inclusion of pronouns is important to show solidarity, and why we shouldn’t backtrack from that.

Adam echoes the importance of the points stated by Cas.

Ayesha asks if a public statement being made to show solidarity is enough to show allyship, Jack and other members of pride soc say yes.

A lot of people in the chat express their views (will be copy and pasted from the chat later on).

Isam highlights those other forms of allyship can also be put forward, and that we shouldn’t make it black and white in terms of how we show allyship and make it inclusive

Saleh also mentions the need to define allyship and the need to show support for all other causes in the University and not just pride soc.

Shahzaib mentions that they shouldn’t be that pressure to show allyship for a cause that goes against one’s beliefs, there needs to be neutral ground.

Elgin explains what allyship is based on his attendance of a meeting about it.

Caspian highlights what the main agenda is for, that pride soc don’t feel supported. Caspian highlights that there is no middle ground with supporting people, you either support them or you don’t. it’s important that in this meeting we address the importance of making sure that people feel supported and included, and don’t backtrack from that.

Jack refers to the open letter and highlights those other options to show solidarity were also mentioned in the open letter.

Natasha apologises if people felt that they were given ultimatums, and tha

Liv echoes that point referring back to the open letter, and apologising to the

Ashley mentions the importance of intersectionality, echoed by KB as well, and clarifies her point of making sure that the primary reason of the meeting (showing support for the LGBTQ+ community in St George’s) isn’t being taken away from or dismissed.

Rishi also asks whether we should continue the meeting or not, since some people have left. Becky suggests if we could address the messages in the chat first and then see if anyone has anything else to say.

Cas says that there is no need to read the chat since it’s the same thing being discussed in the meeting live.

Saleh

Becky mentions her point of being former SU president and the reason she included her pronouns to highlight the importance of making people feel safe. She also notes that the point that needs to be addressed in a different meeting is the question of why people don’t feel comfortable showing their support for the LGBTQ+ community.

Shahzaib highlights the importance of action rather than words and statement and how it allows everyone’s beliefs should be represented and respected.

Saleh forwards motion to adjourn meeting, Becky also mentions we should summarise points and also continue the conversation at a later UPM.

Vote takes place. Motion passed.

Liv says that a belief against a community is prejudice and being a bystander to that is prejudice.

FInn says that it’s not possible to be silent when their entire identities are discussed and being pulled apart. Only wants to come to university and feel comfortable. Not enough being done to make the community safe for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Lottie says that she has never felt more discriminated against than in this meeting and has felt triggered.

Musa clarifies statement made that tolerance is a major part of Islam.

Elgin says that he feels scared in the office since signing the pride soc letter, and finds the response of the SU lacking.

Saleh asks Elgin what he means when he says that he feels unsafe, some members of pride soc reply on behalf of Elgin saying that he isn’t obligated to share more about his experience if he doesn’t want to, Elgin replies Saleh echoing that by saying he doesn’t feel comfortable sharing that.

Saleh ends by saying that everyone has the right to freedom of expression.

Future points to be made in next UPM (15/11/2022):