



# MOTION BOOKLET



**THURSDAY  
20TH FEBRUARY  
5PM**

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# WELCOME

## WHAT IS A MOTION?

A motion, very basically, is an idea. It is a line of text that asks the Union to do something to make a difference for students. If you think there is a project or a campaign that the Union should be running, and isn't, then you have the power to submit a motion for the change you want to see.

At this year's AGM we will discuss and vote on four motions, all of which have been submitted by RGU students.

## I WANT TO CHANGE PART OF A MOTION

If you would like to suggest a change to part of a motion, then you can do this by submitting an amendment.

Amendments can be submitted before the AGM through the Union's website ([www.rguunion.co.uk/agm](http://www.rguunion.co.uk/agm)), or you can wait and submit your amendment during the AGM, at the start of the motion discussion.

**MOTION 1**  
**ENHANCING THE UNION'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

**MOTION 2**  
**STUDENT WELFARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**MOTION 3**  
**EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT AND REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE STUDENTS' UNION**

**MOTION 4**  
**ADVOCATING FOR AI INTEGRATION INTO ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENTS**



## TODAY'S AGENDA

1. Welcome from Chair and quorum count
2. Minutes from the previous AGM [VOTE]
3. Matters arising from the previous AGM
4. Update of Union democratic structures [VOTE]
5. Student President & Vice President update
6. Trustee Board update
7. Governance and finance
  - Draft statutory accounts [VOTE]
  - Affiliations and donations [VOTE]
8. Student Ideas/Motions
  - Motion 1: Enhancing the Union's sustainable development initiatives [VOTE]
  - Motion 2: Student welfare and mental health services [VOTE]
  - Motion 3: Employability support and representation within the Students' Union [VOTE]
  - Motion 4: Advocating for AI integration into academic development and assessments [VOTE]
9. Announcements
10. AOCB



## QUESTIONS

If you have a question for a member of the Union Exec, please raise your hand (on Teams or in the room) or you can submit via the text chat in the meeting.



## MINUTE OF 2024 AGM

# MINUTE OF THE 2024 RGU:UNION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, HELD AT 5:00PM ON 29TH FEBRUARY 2024 AT RGU:UNION AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

## ATTENDANCE

Student Body (138 ordinary members signed in), including:

Patricia Innocent (PI) President (Communicatio & Democracy), Olywatoyin Bolajoko (OB) President (Education & Welfare)

Also in attendance (non-voting):

Gregor Mailer (GM) Chief Executive, Grace Smith (GS) Marketing Manager, Jo Taylor (JT) Operations Co-ordinator (Student Services), Conor Cadger (CC) Activities Co-ordinator, Emily Marooth (EM) Advice & Representation Co-ordinator, Graeme Clark (GC) Finance Officer, Debbie Booth (DB) Operations Co-ordinator (Business Support), Eva Crawford-McKee (EC) Graphic Designer

### 1. Welcome from the Chair and quorum count

PI welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting 2024 and confirmed that quorum had been met.

PI explained that the meeting was being recorded for minute-taking purposes, and reminded all attendees, in the room and online, to stay connected to the Teams call to participate in all votes and enter the prize draw.

PI talked through the meeting agenda and advised anyone wishing to participate to raise their hand, on the call and in the room.

A test vote took place with all in attendance.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were noted from Phoebe Moncur, President (Sport & Physical Activity).

### 3. Minutes from the previous AGM

The minute of the Annual General Meeting 2023 was distributed in advance of the meeting as part of the AGM Motion Booklet, available as a download on the Union website. Hard copies were also distributed to those in the room.

PI noted that the minute was produced from a recording to ensure accuracy.

PI invited any comments from attendees, none were received.

A vote to approve the minute took place. The vote passed with 94% voting YES.



## 4. Matters arising from the previous AGM

OB outlined any actions and matters arising from the previous Annual General Meeting.

**Proposal for solo and dual work pod stations:** It has not been possible to deliver on this request during the 2023/24 academic session due to constraints relating to space development and project finances, however this remains on the Union's agenda and will be explored as further discussions relating to Union space take place.

**Spaces for mental health, relaxation and wellness:** The Union has created a small working group to follow this motion up, led by the President (Education & Welfare) and Advice & Representation Co-ordinator, with positive progress being made. In consultation with the student Disability & Inclusion Champions, student surveys and focus groups have taken place to identify the needs relating to a 'Quiet Room' in the Students' Union. Proposals are being finalised ahead of discussion with the University's Estates Department. It is hoped this can be finalised and delivered ahead of the 2024/25 academic session.

**Multi faith facilities:** Work continues on this motion, which requires significant planning, reclassification of rooms, and in some cases construction work by the University's Estates Department, however the Union has been included in discussions relating to development of a new campus 'masterplan' and will work to ensure multi-faith facilities are discussed as part of this process. In the meantime commitments have been made to ensure temporary multi-faith facilities are available in buildings across campus during peak extended study periods, for example exam time, specifically in the Ishbel Gordon Building and Sir Ian Wood Building.

**Support the divest from fossil fuels campaign:** In October 2023 Robert Gordon University became the 103rd UK university to divest from fossil fuels by announcing its commitment to exclude fossil fuel extraction companies from all its investments by updating its Investment Policy. A press release confirming this change can be read at: <https://peopleandplanet.org/news/2023-10-25/press-release-robert-gordon-university-divests-fossil-fuels>

**Increase RGU accommodation provision for families:** Changes with UK Government student VISA legislation have resulted in fewer international student dependents entering the country and seeking student accommodation. Additionally, limitations within the University's student accommodation sites, which contain only single rooms, have made it challenging to fully deliver on this motion, however the Union has taken steps to improve pre-arrival communication, and increase awareness of alternative accommodation options within the city by introducing a Student Housing Fair in semester one, in addition to the existing fair in semester two. The Union continues to monitor the situation should further support be required.

**Affordable bus travel for students over 21:** Free bus travel for young people in Scotland is policy of the Scottish Government, and is not controlled at a local level by operators, for example First Aberdeen or Stagecoach. This provides some challenges in relation to delivering this motion, however during the 2023/24 session Student Presidents have met with leaders of Aberdeen City Council and raised this issue, requesting further discussion and action. Additionally, Student Presidents meet periodically with First Aberdeen and have raised concerns regarding ticket pricing. Further work continues.

**Insufficient allocation of student parking permits:** The Union meets regularly with the University's Estates Department, who manage the transport and parking permit procedures across campus. This student concern was raised and co-incided with a University-wide review of parking policies and



## MINUTE OF 2024 AGM

procedures. Students' Union representation was included on this policy working group, which helped to shape the introduction of new permit allocation procedures. An additional 70 parking permits were made available during the 2022/23 academic session, with the Union continuing to monitor any feedback related to this.

### 5. Student President & Vice President update

PI introduced a video containing updates from the Union Student Executive team regarding work carried out during the academic session to date.

PI invited questions from attendees.

A member on Teams thanked the Union team for spending time focusing on neurodivergent students and working to make the campus more accessible this year.

A member in the room commended the Union team for their work this year. It is suggested that greater work is done in the early stages of inductions to ensure students are aware of the work of the Union and its activities. PI explained the Union's introduction activities that take place during Freshers Week and throughout the year, and reinforced that all students are automatically members of the Union.

A member on Teams asked a question regarding tuition fees. PI explained this will be discussed later in the agenda.

A member on Teams believes not all students are aware they are a member of the Union. This was noted.

### 6. Trustee Board Update

An update on behalf of the Trustee Board was circulated ahead of the meeting as part of the AGM Booklet. GM presented a summary to attendees.

Changes to Trustee Board membership: The most significant membership changes at Trustee Board level saw External Trustee and Chair of the Board, David Strachan, move on at the conclusion of his term in office. Ian Campbell, current chair of the Finance Committee was appointed as Chair of the Board from 2023 for a term of three years. Elsewhere, Caroline Daniel, External Trustee also moved on at the end of her term in office. Student Trustees Calvin Park and Opeyemi Adedeji also leave the Board due to graduations and the conclusion of their term in office. The Union will soon begin recruitment for new External and Student Trustees to join the Board, in line with the Trustee Recruitment regulations.

Management and review of financial situation: The Trustee Board manages the finances of the Union on a quarterly basis and approves its budget annually. The Board also considers how the Union manages its reserves and how it undertakes its statutory audit. A new auditor was appointed in 2022, with Hall Morrice now tasked with carrying out the Union's annual financial audit process. A financial summary will be presented by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Trustee Board at the Annual General Meeting.



Regular review of risk and related procedures: Every quarter the Trustee Board reviews perceived risks to the Union, and ensures correct procedures are in place to protect the charity, its staff, and the students it represents. The most significant risk has been identified as an inherited and on-going pension liability obligation from a former pension scheme.

Compliance with Education Act: Representatives from the Trustee Board met with University senior management, including the Principal, at an annual meeting to provide an update on the work of the Union, and to provide assurances that the Union complies with law as written in our Code of Practice and the Education Act (1994)

Support with significant projects and initiatives: The Board meet quarterly to review Union operations and to provide support with regards to major projects or initiatives including; ongoing Union space development projects in the Riverside Building, which has recently received an investment from the Union's reserves; guidance and assistance with identifying and maximising external funding sources; long-term strategic direction; plus regular reviews of the Union's governance documentation. Members of the Board also assist with significant projects upon request.

## 7. Governance and Finance

GM explained the full accounts and audit findings could be found on the Union website.

GM outlined £813,561 total income and £766,044 total expenditure, providing a positive variance of £47,517 in the statement for 2023/24. Income presented an increase compared to 2022/23 due to a full return to activity providing more opportunity to generate income, for example a strong Freshers period, a full-scale Freshers Fayre with brands and businesses on campus, plus event ticket sales and merchandise. The block grant from the University is around £500k. Expenditure was also a significant increase due to increased costs relating to on-campus operations, for example event costs, specifically increased costs relating to venues, catering and entertainment. The Union ends the year with a surplus of £47,517k which is reinvested into student activities and goes into reserves.

GM explained the Union carried healthy reserves in case of emergency, and that with the backing of the Trustee Board funds can be released from these to fund major developments, for example the new Union space and welfare initiatives.

GM presented the balance sheet which reports £251,404k in total assets, but explained that the Union suffers from a liability of £636,862k relating to a former pension scheme. GM explained that many other Students' Unions are also suffering from this and that payment plans are in place to cover this shortfall over the next decade, at a cost of around £50k per annum. This means the balance sheet displays a total deficit of £385,458k, however auditors and Trustee Board are comfortable that the pension liability is controlled, with assets of £251k placing the Union in a positive position.

A vote to approve the accounts took place. The vote passed with 88% voting YES.



# MINUTE OF 2024 AGM

## Affiliations and donations

GM explained that the affiliations and donations are outlined in the AGM Motion Booklet. GM outlined the most significant figures, which included National Union of Students at £13k. Significant sporting affiliations include British Universities & Colleges Sport at £5.8k, Scottish Student Sport at £8k.

GM presented a total of £2,141 charity donations and explained that the Union is duty bound to present any donations that have been made directly from the Union's bank account to another charity. GM explained that the Union is aware lots of fundraising takes place by students throughout the year, but much of these donations are now made through online pages such as Just Giving, so the Union does not legally track or report this.

A vote to approve the affiliations and donations took place. The vote passed with 93% voting YES.

## 8. Student ideas / motions

**Ensure core Union forums and democratic meetings are hybrid so all students, including distance learners, can attend.**

Oluwatoyin Bolajoko (OB) presented this motion.

- What is the problem - There has been an observed lack of participation and engagement of online/part-time/distant learning (alternative pathways) students in Union programs, especially democratic meetings and forums. This is because most of these meetings are often conducted on-campus leaving the alternative pathways students with no opportunity to lend their voice on matters affecting their student experience.

- Why is it a problem - As an institution that prioritises EDI, the under-representation of alternative pathways students is a disservice to the work being done across all academic schools. Since the voices of these students are not being reflected at forums and democratic meetings, it is difficult to receive their feedback and effect the necessary changes needed to improve their experience

- What is the solution - Union democratic meetings (such as student voice, AGMs, and societies' forums) should be conducted in a Hybrid format to allow the participation of students who are not able to attend on-campus.

PI invited speakers or statements against the motion, none were received.

PI explained no amendments were received in advance and invited amendments from attendees, none were received.

A vote to approve the motion took place. The vote passed with 93% voting YES.



# MINUTE OF 2024 AGM



**Represent the financial challenges encountered by student parents at an institutional, local, and national level, and lobby for support.**

Iro Karanika (IK) presented this motion.

- What is the problem - Childcare coverage has been reduced, meaning students with children have to pay more out of pocket to be able to go to the daycare.

- Why is it a problem - Student parents who are studying were not informed in time of this change in how much of these costs are covered, and now they have to pay more out of pocket which is not fair on the parents' behalf. They are already too full with their studying and the bare minimum is supporting them 100% to make sure their children are safe without having to pay entirely out of pocket.

- What is the solution - The Union should represent the financial challenges of student parents at an institutional, local and national level, and lobby for an increase to the Coverage Costs for Childcare services at RGU or implement a scheme that would help parents financially.

PI explained no amendments were received in advance and invited amendments from attendees, none were received.

PI invited speakers or statements for or against the motion, none were received.

Comment from Teams: In favour of the motion and more could be done to hold the Scottish Government accountable.

Comment from the room: There should be more spaces available on campus for childcare or reduced rates for nursery places. OB explained that the Union has been working with the University to increase childcare support for students. There is an existing nursery on campus which RGU does not run but is affiliated with. The demand for childcare has reduced drastically due to changes in the dependent immigration rules. Talks are still ongoing with the University to review policies relating to children on campus and family friendly events.

A vote to approve the motion took place. The vote passed with 96% voting YES.

**Introduce a funded programme to provide free access to sports clubs for students experiencing financial difficulties**

Mohtashim Iqbal E Waris (MW) presented this motion.

- What is the problem - RGU is providing number of sports activities for students, a few of them are free (i-w Gym, Swimming and a few classes) that benefits a lot of students. However, when it comes to sports, that limits most of the international student participation since most of the student can not afford it.

- Why is it a problem - The cost associated with participating in sports is difficult for everyone, rendering it unattainable for a significant number of students. This issue goes beyond mere inconvenience, as it creates a barrier that deprives students of the physical, mental, and social benefits that sports provide. As a result, a growing number of students are unable to engage in extracurricular sports activities, hindering their overall development and potentially perpetuating disparities in health and well-being. Addressing the unaffordability of sports for students is crucial



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to ensuring equal opportunities and holistic growth for all.

- What is the solution - Offering a funded program that provides free slots for booking in sports activities for students to address the issue of unaffordability and promote equal opportunities. Benefits: Physical Well-being: Access to sports activities promotes physical fitness, reducing the risk of health issues such as obesity and cardiovascular diseases. Mental Health: Participation in sports has been linked to improved mental health, including reduced stress, anxiety, and depression. It provides a constructive outlet for managing emotions and building resilience. Social Skills: Sports foster teamwork, communication, and camaraderie, helping students develop crucial social skills. This can positively impact their relationships in both academic and personal settings. Academic Performance: Research suggests that regular physical activity is associated with improved cognitive function and academic performance. Engaging in sports can contribute to a well-rounded education. Community Building: The program can strengthen community ties by bringing together students, parents, educators, and local businesses in support of a shared goal - the well-being and development of the youth.

PI explained no amendments were received in advance and invited amendments from attendees.

Comment from Teams: The motion should be for students experiencing financial difficulties and international students. PI explained that the motion would benefit all students, including international students, without the need for this amendment.

Comment from the floor: The motion could also involve societies and should not just be limited to sports clubs.

Comment from the floor: How would this be funded? Would clubs and societies miss out on membership income? GM explained that this would not remove the membership fee, but a funding pot would be created to cover any membership costs of students who successfully apply. The size of the funding pot would be dictated by the Union's ability to source external funding or sponsors. Clubs would not miss out on any membership income.

Comment from the floor: How would the application process work to ensure it is fair? PI explained that should the motion pass the Union would then work to develop the finer details of the process further and that would include answers to this question.

**Proposed Amendment: Introduce a funded programme to provide free access to activities for students experiencing financial difficulties.**

A vote to approve the amendment took place. The vote passed with 94% voting YES.

Comment from Teams: How do you prove that someone is experiencing financial difficulties? PI and OB explained that should the motion pass the Union would then work to develop the finer details of the process further and that would include answers to this question.

Comment from the floor: Societies should receive a discount if hiring space in RGU SPORT. PI invited the member to discuss this issue after the meeting has concluded.

PI invited speakers or statements for or against the motion, none were received.

A vote to approve the amended motion took place. The vote passed with 88% voting YES.

# MINUTE OF 2024 AGM



## **Increase the visibility of financial support services at the University**

Iro Karanika (IK) presented this motion.

- What is the problem - Students are struggling making ends meet and RGU does not provide adequate advisory support for students.

- Why is it a problem - In order to have a decent life they have to keep up with 3 or 4 jobs, which makes balancing of uni and work a bit more challenging than it should be. More students are dropping out of Uni because of this or getting a loan, which is not ideal. Most of them are even embarrassed to say anything.

- What is the solution - The Union should work with the University to increase the the visibility of financial support services at RGU, and possibly create more scholarships so that the financial stress of students is reduced.

PI explained no amendments were received in advance and invited amendments from attendees.

Comment from the floor: This should be amended to increase visibility of Inclusion, Wellbeing, Counselling and Employability services. PI explained that many of these services hold drop-in sessions but with financial support there is a perceived lack of student-facing visibility. The member noted that many students are still not aware that the services are available to them.

Comment from the floor: There is a link between these services and it makes sense to cover them all in the motion.

Comment from the floor: The focus should be on visibility of the financial support services, grouping it together dilutes the aim of the motion.

**Proposed Amendment: Increase the visibility of support services at the University, including employability, wellbeing & inclusion, and student finance.**

A vote to approve the amendment took place. The vote passed with 90% voting YES.

PI invited further speakers or statements against the motion, none were received.

A vote to approve the amended motion took place. The vote passed with 89% voting YES.

## **Flexibility relating to fee payment procedures and repayment plans.**

Bryan Uyiosa Igbinigie (BI) presented this motion.

- What is the problem - The current tuition payment structure at our university has posed significant challenges for students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds or facing financial hardship. The requirement to pay tuition fees within short deadlines has placed immense pressure on students and their families, leading to financial strain, anxiety, and even mental health issues. Moreover, the lack of flexible payment options or support mechanisms has exacerbated these challenges, leaving many students feeling overwhelmed and unsupported. Constant fluctuations in exchange rates and the uncertainty surrounding tuition payment can induce significant psychological stress and anxiety among African students. The fear of not being able to afford tuition fees or the prospect of accumulating debt can negatively impact students' mental health.



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- Why is it a problem - Tuition trauma, stemming from the stress and anxiety associated with financial strain and difficulties in paying tuition fees, has profound psychological effects on students. Here are some ways in which tuition trauma impacts students psychologically: Increased Stress and Anxiety, Feelings of Helplessness and Hopelessness, Impact on Mental Health, Social Withdrawal and Isolation

- What is the solution - Proposing a solution that requires international students to pay a minimum of 50 percent of their tuition fees before coming to the United Kingdom, along with the establishment of a more flexible payment plan after resumption, can indeed alleviate the burden of tuition payment and mitigate the psychological impact of tuition trauma. Here's how this solution can address the problem effectively: 1. 50% Prepayment Requirement: Reduced Financial Stress: Requiring international students to pay a significant portion of their tuition fees before arriving in the United Kingdom reduces the financial burden they face upon starting their studies. With this, students can better focus on settling into their new academic environment and adjusting to university life without the added stress of impending tuition payments. Better Financial Planning: Prepayment allows students to plan their finances more effectively and allocate funds accordingly. Knowing in advance the portion of tuition fees they must pay before coming to the UK enables students to budget and save appropriately, ensuring they have sufficient funds available to meet this obligation. Enhanced Enrollment Stability: Requiring a 50% prepayment can also enhance enrollment stability for universities, as students who have made a significant financial commitment are more likely to follow through with their plans to attend. This can reduce the risk of last-minute withdrawals or dropout due to financial reasons, benefiting both students and institutions. 2; Establishing a more flexible payment Plan Establishing a more flexible payment plan after students' arrival in the UK allows for the gradual payment of remaining tuition fees over an extended period. This approach reduces the immediate financial strain on students, particularly those facing currency exchange challenges or relying on external sources of funding.

PI explained no amendments were received in advance and invited amendments from attendees.

Comment from the floor: The motion should be amended to read "...fee payment and repayment plans for international students". PI explained that many other students also pay fees, for example Postgraduate Students and those from elsewhere in the UK. Sabbatical Executive believe this impacts the motions core aim.

Comment from Teams: The communications from the Finance Department are too threatening and impact the mental health of the students.

Comment from the floor: The tone of the communications are very threatening, something should be added to the motion relating to this. OB explained that Sabbatical Executive believe this impacts the motions core aim, which focuses on the payment procedure. OB explained that work is being carried out between the Union, Student Life and the Finance Department to improve the tone of communications issued.

Comment from the floor: Be firm, if you don't pay you should not graduate.

A vote to approve the motion took place. The vote passed with 93% voting YES.

# MINUTE OF 2024 AGM



## 9. Announcements

OB highlighted the Student Elections, with nominations currently open. All Student President and Vice President roles are available.

PI promoted the Student Achievement Awards Ball, which is coming soon with tickets on sale. Students are encouraged to log their volunteering hours.

OB introduced two new initiatives, launching soon. The Union will be introducing an emergency food parcel scheme, which can be booked from the Union website weekly. Supper Club will launch next week on a Thursday evening, with free hot meals available. The Union will have access to cost of living support three times a week via Breakfast Club, Supper Club and Emergency Food Parcels.

## 10. AOCB

PI gathered details for the price draw.

PI thanked all attendees.

The meeting closed.



# MATTERS ARISING FROM 2024 AGM

## MATTERS ARISING FROM 2024 AGM

**ENSURE CORE UNION FORUMS AND DEMOCRATIC MEETINGS ARE HYBRID SO ALL STUDENTS, INCLUDING DISTANCE LEARNERS, CAN ATTEND.**

The Union successfully trialled a hybrid Student Voice Forum during semester one, with students in attendance on campus and online via Teams. Following this trial there are plans to continue delivery of the forum in this manner going forward. The Union AGM has been presented as a hybrid meeting since 2022.

**REPRESENT THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES OF STUDENT PARENTS AT AN INSTITUTIONAL, LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL, AND LOBBY FOR SUPPORT.**

Changes to UK Government immigration rules regarding international student dependents has seen a significant reduction in the number of student parents seeking support from the Union. However, it is understood that there are still many student parents enrolled at RGU, and the Union has attempted to re-establish the Student Parent Network to ensure these students can help Student Presidents understand their current challenges and work to represent them at relevant levels.

**INTRODUCE A FUNDED PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE FREE ACCESS TO STUDENT ACTIVITY GROUPS FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES.**

Development work is taking place on this project, being led by the President (Sport & Physical Activity) and the President (Communication & Democracy). A number of Students' Unions based throughout the country run similar initiatives and they are currently being consulted. Upon completion of a framework the Union will attempt to secure funding to enable a full rollout.

# MATTERS ARISING FROM 2024 AGM



## **INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY, INCLUDING EMPLOYABILITY, WELLBEING & INCLUSION, AND STUDENT FINANCE.**

Student Presidents work closely with a number of key contacts within the University's Student Life departments which enables feedback regarding visibility and accessibility of the services to be presented. Collaborative efforts have been made to ensure students are aware of these various support services, with an increase in campus-based activity and online promotion, and guest features in Union-led media such as the Student President podcast.

## **FLEXIBILITY RELATING TO FEE PAYMENT PROCEDURES AND REPAYMENT PLANS.**

Following the AGM discussions took place between Union representatives, University Executive members and senior management from the University finance departments. A flexible and more favourable fee payment procedure was negotiated and has been implemented.



# DEMOCRATIC REVIEW

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During the 2024/25 academic session a review was conducted into the Union’s democratic structures.

This process, led by the Chief Executive Officer, Student President (Communication & Democracy), and Advice & Representation Co-ordinator, aimed to focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of the current Student Executive Committee, including the structuring and responsibilities of Student Presidents and Vice Presidents; core feedback-gathering mechanisms including Student Forums; plus the roles and influence of other key student representative roles.

A series of consultations, surveys, and focus groups were held throughout semester one, with feedback gathered from students alongside a number of key stakeholders from within the Union and University, including internal staff teams, University Executive and senior management, academic schools, Student Life, Student Partnership, RGU SPORT, EDI, plus current and former Student Presidents and Vice Presidents. Sector-wide research was also conducted, with input received from a number of Students’ Unions across Scotland and the UK.

Five amendments to the structuring of the Executive Committee, Student Forums, and associated representative roles have now been proposed, with the draft amended structure approved by the Union’s Sabbatical Executive Committee in January 2025, the Union’s Student Executive Committee in February 2025, and the Union’s Trustee Board in February 2025.

The structure is now presented to the Union’s student membership for approval at the charity’s Annual General Meeting, with changes to be implemented for the March 2026 student election cycle, ahead of the 2026/27 academic session

### PROJECT TIMELINE

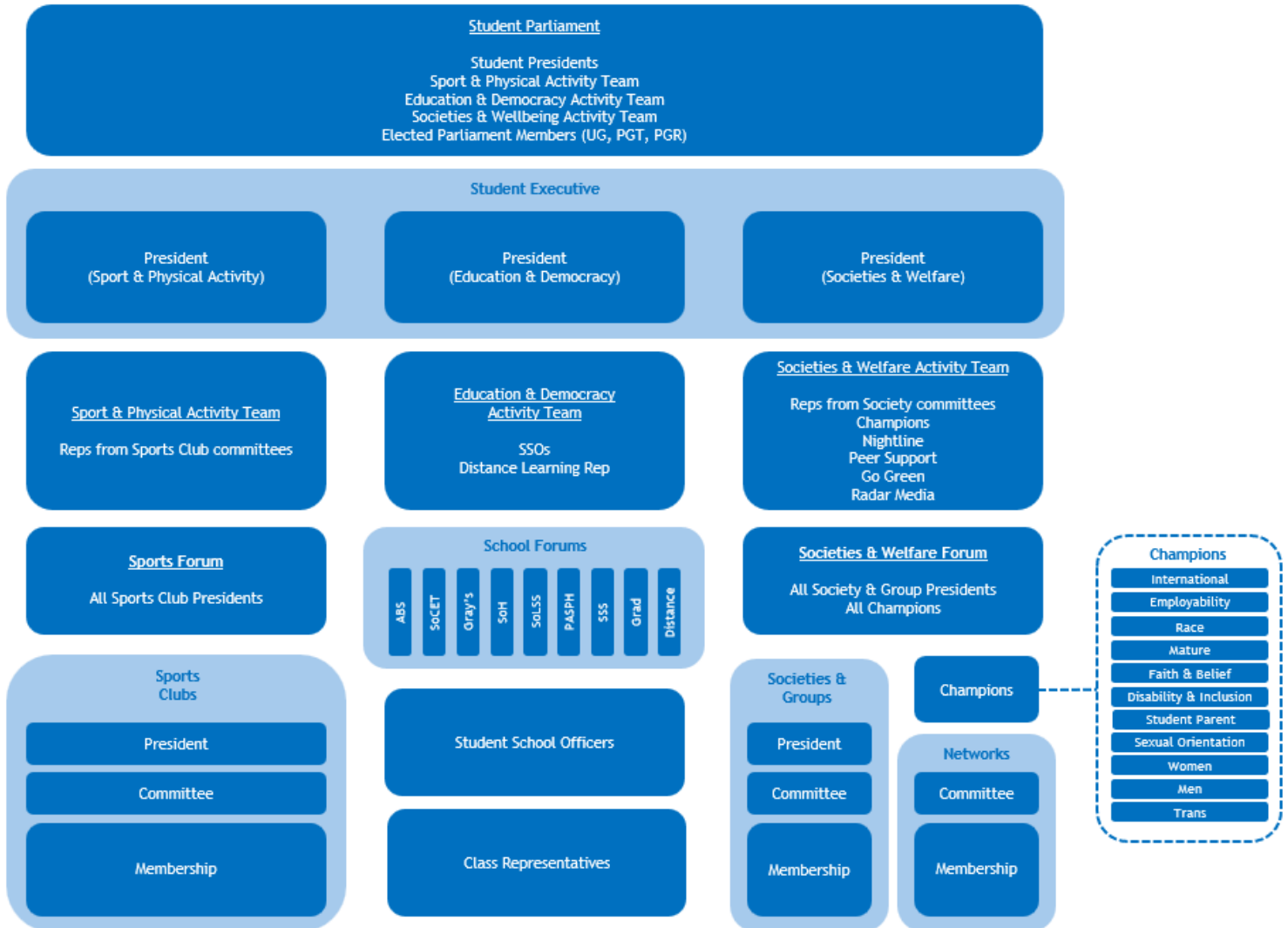
• Research and feedback gathering	Oct, Nov, Dec 2024	COMPLETE
• Analysis of research and feedback	Dec 2024	COMPLETE
• Development of proposed structures and changes	Dec 2024 & Jan 2025	COMPLETE
• Approval by Sabbatical Executive Committee	Jan 2025	APPROVED
• Approval by Executive Committee	Feb 2025	APPROVED
• Approval by Trustee Board	Feb 2025	APPROVED
• Approval by AGM	Feb 2025	APPROVED
• Amendment of associated regulations & procedures	Mar - Dec 2025	TO APPROVE
• Deadline for full implementation	Mar 2026	



# DEMOCRATIC REVIEW



# DRAFT STRUCTURE



## WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Turn over to read about the five changes applied to this structure and the rationale behind them.



# DEMOCRATIC REVIEW

## **PRESIDENT COMMUNICATION & DEMOCRACY**

### **BECOMES**

## **PRESIDENT SOCIETIES & WELFARE**

Students and staff believe it can be difficult to understand the duties and responsibilities of some of the current President roles.

It is not apparent which President is responsible for supporting Societies.

While the roles of some Presidents have evolved over time to meet student demands, the role descriptors do not always reflect the day-to-day work carried out.

Currently one President has responsibility for recruiting and supporting SSOs, the Class Rep system, and Champion roles, this can lead to bottlenecking at peak times of year.

There is inconsistency in the chairing of Student Voice forum and AGM, two similar democratic activities that are split between two different Presidents.

President (Education & Welfare) role is very broad and risks being skewed in different directions depending on the motivations of the incumbent.

Responsibilities and duties are more evenly spread among all President roles, with renaming of the roles providing clarity regarding their core areas of work.

Combining responsibility for Societies and Welfare allows Champions and Networks to align under one President, ensuring consistency in the support offered and removing any grey areas. This also ensures consistency in the support offered to welfare-related Student Groups (eg Nightline and Peer Support) and ensures they also align with Champions.

Combining Education and Democratic activities under one President allows for consistency in the feedback-gathering process, ensuring feedback received by SSOs and Reps can quickly and easily be brought to Exec Committee, Student Parliament, or other relevant committees to action. This also allows for focused delivery of the proposed School Forum and Student Parliament structure.

## **PRESIDENT EDUCATION & WELFARE**

### **BECOMES**

## **PRESIDENT EDUCATION & DEMOCRACY**

The current Student Executive structure is outdated and contains inefficiencies. It can be difficult for Vice Presidents to achieve, or make progress with, elected manifesto aims due to academic commitments and other external pressures, which risks increasing the workload of Student Presidents or seeing projects incomplete.

Activity Teams will allow for workloads to be spread across a group of students, with assigned roles, instead of just one or two Vice Presidents. Increased exposure to Union structures and the work of the Executive will provide greater opportunity for progression as a larger pool of students are included in planning and delivery of Union activities.

## **VICE PRESIDENTS**

### **BECOME**

## **ACTIVITY TEAMS**

# DEMOCRATIC REVIEW



## STUDENT VOICE FORUM

BECOMES

## SCHOOL FORUMS

AND

## STUDENT PARLIAMENT

Student Voice Forum in its current form does not reflect its definition in the Union regulations.

The forum is often used as a mechanism to discuss feedback relating to school or university-wide issues, not as a platform to hold the Union to account.

Often conversation can be dominated by niche or specific issues relating to one or two schools only.

Many issues raised can be handled at a school level and do not need to be discussed at an 'all-student' meeting.

Both the Union and the University would like to have more opportunities to meet with students in a structured forum setting.

**School Forums** will allow for focused discussion regarding feedback and issues within each school, facilitated by the Union. This will provide the Union with structured regular opportunities to visit every school and listen directly to student feedback. Meetings are delivered in partnership with schools, strengthening the relationship between the Union and each school.

**Student Parliament** provides a structured platform for students to hold the Union and its Executive to account. Its structure will allow for an accurate representation of the student body to be involved and will empower them to become part of a high-level decision-making process of the Union.

## EQUALITY CHAMPIONS

BECOME

## UNION CHAMPIONS

The term 'Equality Champion' limits the roles to those defined by protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act and reduces ability to introduce new champion roles to represent other areas of the student experience.

This amendment widens the scope of the roles available to ensure representation is in place for as many student groups and demographics as possible. It allows greater flexibility for the Union to add or remove roles as student demand dictates.

## ADDITIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

It will also be necessary to update a number of references in the Union Constitution, specifically:

- The 'Executive Committee' shall be defined as comprising the Student Presidents (Sabbatical Officers).
- All references to 'Sabbatical Executive Committee' shall be amended to read 'Executive Committee'.
- All references to 'Vice Presidents' shall be removed.

Articles containing such references:  
3.1.3, 6.2, 6.5, 6.6, 7.2, 9.2, 16.1, 16.2



## TRUSTEE BOARD UPDATE

### ABOUT THE TRUSTEE BOARD

RGU Students' Union is governed by a Trustee Board, made up of both student and external trustees. Essentially, this Board exists to ensure the Union operates in a responsible manner and to provide support and guidance to the Executive and staff teams. The external trustees all have experience and skills in focused areas, such as finance, management, marketing, and fundraising, which helps to ensure that any major decisions are always made with the Union's financial, legal and strategic priorities in mind.

### FINANCE COMMITTEE

Ian Campbell (2020 - pres) - *Chair*  
Jo Royle (2019 - pres)  
Bryan Uyiosa Igbinigie (2024 - pres)  
Seth Odei Asare (2024 - pres)  
Abhishek Kumar (2024 - pres)  
Patricia Innocent (2023 - 2024)  
Oluwatoyin Bolajoko (2023 - 2024)  
Phoebe Moncur (2023 - 2024)

#### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Gregor Mailer (2020 - pres)

#### FINANCE OFFICER

Graeme Clark (2018 - pres)

#### HEAD OF SPORT

Ian Lowe (2023 - pres)

### TRUSTEE BOARD MEMBERSHIP

#### SABBATICAL TRUSTEES

Bryan Uyiosa Igbinigie (2024 - pres)  
Seth Odei Asare (2024 - pres)  
Abhishek Kumar (2024 - pres)  
Patricia Innocent (2023 - 2024)  
Oluwatoyin Bolajoko (2023 - 2024)  
Phoebe Moncur (2023 - 2024)

#### STUDENT TRUSTEES

Kemi Odunsi-Ujiagbe (2024 - pres)  
Blessing Balaun (2024 - pres)

#### EXTERNAL TRUSTEES

Ian Campbell (2020 - pres) - *Chair*  
Jo Hall (2022 - pres)

#### UNIVERSITY TRUSTEES

Jo Royle (2019 - pres)

#### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Gregor Mailer (2020 - pres)



## KEY UPDATES, DECISIONS & ACTIONS

### Changes to Trustee Board membership

The most significant membership changes saw the appointment of two new Student Trustees, Kemi Odunsi-Ujiagbe and Blessing Balaun, who join the Board following successful campaigns as part of the the Union's By-election process in November. The Union is currently recruiting for new External Trustees to join the Board, in line with the Trustee Recruitment regulations. This will see two new members appointed towards the end of semester two, for an initial term of three years.

### Management and review of financial situation

The Trustee Board manages the finances of the Union on a quarterly basis and approves its budget annually. The Board also considers how the Union manages its reserves and how it undertakes its statutory audit. Following appointment in 2022 Hall Morrice continue to carry out the Union's annual financial audit process. A financial summary is included in this booklet and will be presented by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Trustee Board at the Annual General Meeting.

### Regular review of risk and related procedures

Every quarter the Trustee Board reviews perceived risks to the Union, and ensures correct procedures are in place to protect the charity, its staff, and the students it represents. The most significant risk has been identified as an inherited and on-going pension liability obligation from a former pension scheme.

### Compliance with Education Act

Representatives from the Trustee Board met with University senior management, including the Principal, at an annual meeting to provide an update on the work of the Union, and to provide assurances that the Union complies with law as written in our Code of Practice and the Education Act (1994)

### Support with significant projects and initiatives

The Board meet to review Union operations and to provide support with regards to major projects or initiatives including; ongoing Union space development projects in the Riverside Building; guidance and assistance with identifying and maximising external funding sources; long-term strategic direction; plus regular reviews of the Union's governance documentation. Members of the Board also assist with significant projects upon request.



# FINANCE UPDATE

Robert Gordon University Student Association

Financial Statements for the  
Year Ended 31 July 2024

## Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 July 2024

Note	2024 Unrestricted Funds	2024 Designated Funds	2024 Total Funds	2023 Unrestricted Funds	2023 Designated Funds	2023 Total Funds	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>Income from:</b>							
Donations and legacies	2	528,000	-	528,000	530,500	-	530,500
Income from fundraising activities	2	14,732	-	14,732	38,131	-	38,131
Other trading activities	2	249,942	-	249,942	244,930	-	244,930
<b>Total</b>	2	<b>792,674</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>792,674</b>	813,561	-	813,561
<b>Expenditure on:</b>							
Charitable activities	3	(703,362)	(5,706)	(709,068)	(670,096)	(3,496)	(673,592)
Raising funds	3	(72,075)	-	(72,075)	(92,452)	-	(92,452)
<b>Total</b>	3	<b>(775,437)</b>	<b>(5,706)</b>	<b>(781,143)</b>	(762,548)	(3,496)	(766,044)
<b>Net income/(expenditure) before transfers</b>		<b>17,237</b>	<b>(5,706)</b>	<b>11,531</b>	(51,013)	(3,496)	47,517
<b>Transfers</b>		-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>17,237</b>	<b>(5,706)</b>	<b>11,531</b>	51,013	(3,469)	47,517
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>							
Total (deficit)/surplus brought forward	9	(400,710)	15,252	(385,458)	(451,723)	18,748	(432,975)
<b>Total (deficit)/surplus carried forward</b>	9	<b>(383,473)</b>	<b>9,546</b>	<b>(373,927)</b>	(400,710)	15,252	(385,458)

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.

Expenditure on charitable activities of £709,068 includes a credit of £31,580 (2023: credit of £41,869) for provision of pension deficit obligations. Further details are included in note 10 to the financial statements. All activities relate to continuing operations.

Summary received from Hall Morrice, independent auditors, to the Trustees of Robert Gordon University Student Association:

We have audited the financial statements of Robert Gordon University Student Association (the 'charity') for the period ended 31 July 2024 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 July 2024 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and Regulation 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

# FINANCE UPDATE



## Balance Sheet at 31 July 2024

	Notes	Year ended 31 July 2024		Year ended 31 July 2023	
		£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible assets	6		29,654		35,371
<b>Current assets</b>					
Stock		1,355		-	
Debtors	7	33,686		34,402	
Cash held on behalf of clubs and societies		67,019		65,177	
Cash at bank and in hand		251,584		244,699	
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>353,644</b>		<b>344,278</b>	
<b>Creditors – amounts falling due within one year</b>	8	<b>(151,943)</b>		<b>(128,245)</b>	
<b>Net current assets</b>			<b>201,701</b>		<b>216,033</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>			<b>231,355</b>		<b>251,404</b>
<b>Provisions: pension liability</b>	10		<b>(605,282)</b>		<b>(636,862)</b>
<b>Net liabilities</b>			<b>(373,927)</b>		<b>(385,458)</b>
<b>The deficit of the charity Unrestricted funds</b>	9				
General funds			221,809		236,152
Pension reserve			(605,282)		(636,862)
			<b>(383,473)</b>		<b>(400,710)</b>
Designated funds			9,546		15,252
			<b>(373,927)</b>		<b>(385,458)</b>
<b>Total charity deficit</b>			<b>(373,927)</b>		<b>(385,458)</b>



## AFFILIATIONS & DONATIONS

# CHARITY DONATIONS

Coppafeel  
Endometriosis UK  
Grampian Children Respite Care  
Somebody Cares  
Medicins Sans Frontieres

**FUNDRAISING TOTAL**  
**£3220**

## UNION AFFILIATIONS

National Union of Students - £12,700

## SPORTING AFFILIATIONS

Basketball - £75  
British Universities & Colleges Sport - £5,404  
Mountaineering - £625  
Netball - £120  
Rifle - £225  
Scottish Rowing - £485  
Scottish Student Sport - £5,620  
Scottish Womens' Football - £180  
Volleyball Scotland - £88





# MOTIONS

**MOTION 1**  
**ENHANCING THE UNION'S  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVES**

**MOTION 2**  
**STUDENT WELFARE AND MENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES**

**MOTION 3**  
**EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT AND  
REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE  
STUDENTS' UNION**

**MOTION 4**  
**ADVOCATING FOR AI INTEGRATION  
INTO ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AND ASSESSMENTS**



## **I WANT TO CHANGE PART OF A MOTION**

If you would like to suggest a change to part of a motion, then you can do this by submitting an amendment.

Amendments will be invited during the motion discussion and will follow the process outlined on the next page.

# HOW DO WE DISCUSS AND VOTE ON MOTIONS?

There will be an open discussion for each motion.

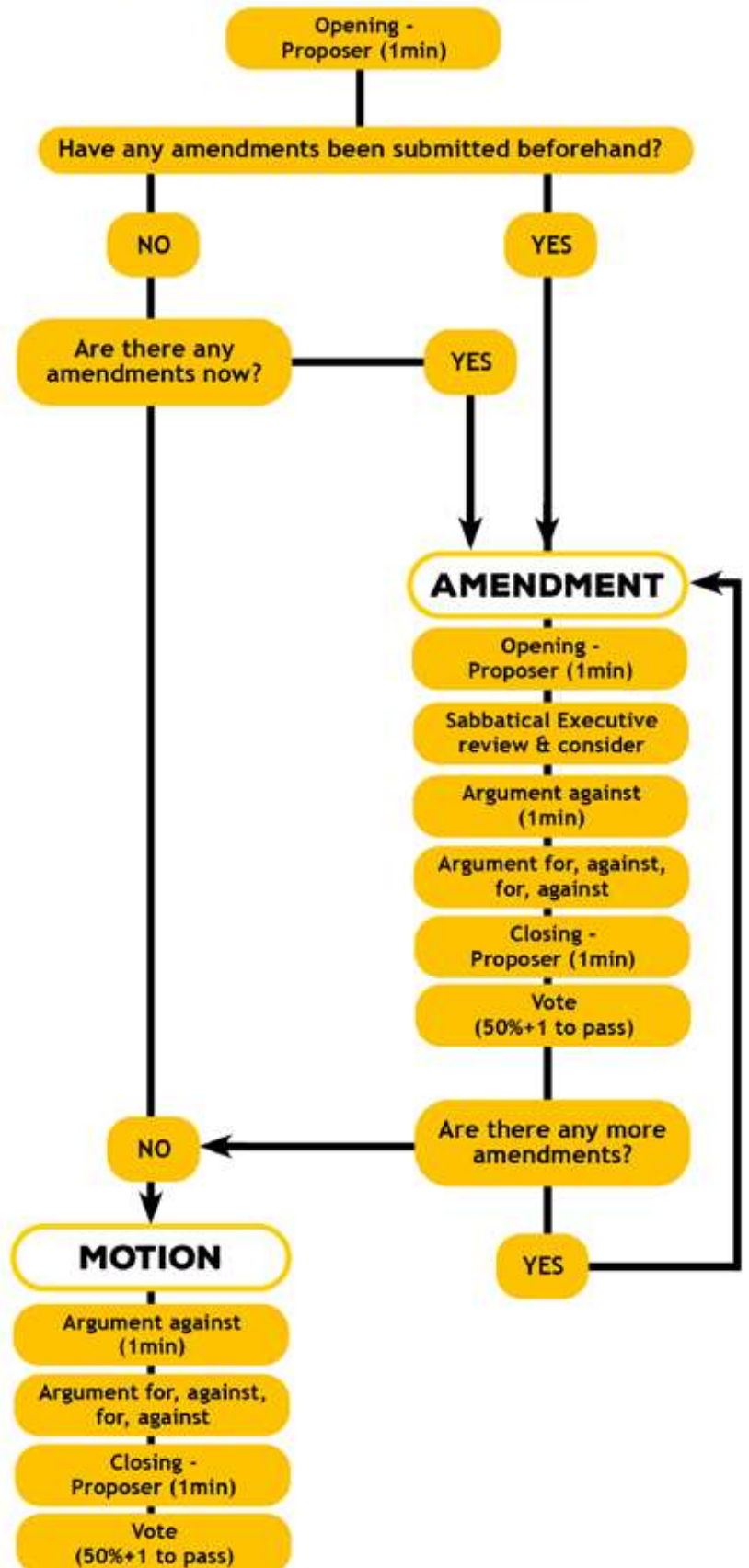
Motions will be called one by one and the proposer will have an opportunity to speak to the audience for one minute, explaining why they think students should support their motion. Students are then invited to argue against the motion, and there may be a small debate.

It is also possible that students may want to change small parts of a motion, these are called amendments (find out more on the next page). Each proposed amendment will get a separate debate and a separate vote.

After all amendments have been voted on, and there have been arguments for and against the motion, the proposer will have the chance to deliver a closing speech before it is put to a vote.

If it passes, then the motion is endorsed by the AGM and becomes RGU:Union policy!

## MOTION PROCESS





## AMENDMENT INFORMATION

### WHAT IS AN AMENDMENT?

Amendments are suggested changes to a motion. Once motions are published online, you have the chance to read over them and decide whether you agree or not. If there is a part of the motion that you would like to change, you can submit an amendment.

Any amendment submitted **must...**

- 1) be viable
- 2) be reasonable
- 3) not amend the motion in such a way that it impacts on the motion's core aim

### HOW DO I SUBMIT AN AMENDMENT?

Amendments can be submitted before the AGM through the Union's website ([www.rguunion.co.uk/agm](http://www.rguunion.co.uk/agm)), or you can wait and submit your amendment during the AGM, at the start of the motion discussion.

The meeting chair will invite amendments before discussion of each motion.

### HOW DO I WRITE AN AMENDMENT?

Simply outline which motion you are discussing, highlight the specific change you would like to make, and the rational for the change.

Changes could be to add, remove, change, or reword a point in the motion.

### EXAMPLE AMENDMENT

#### MOTION

"RGU:Union should look to further support students in finding safe accommodation"

#### AMENDMENT

Housing is expensive, the Union should also help students in finding affordable accommodation. Add "affordable" to the motion, making it "RGU:Union should look to further support students in finding safe and affordable accommodation"



## **MOTION 1**

### **ENHANCE THE UNION'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

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## **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?**

The increasing global climate crisis necessitates urgent action at institutional and community levels to ensure sustainable practices are embedded in all activities

Student communities are critical in leading sustainability efforts by setting an example in waste management, ethical sourcing, and carbon footprint reduction.

RGU has made progress in sustainability but the Students' Union lacks a structured and student-led committee to work alongside RGU Go Green to oversee and drive green initiatives.

## **WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?**

RGU has a moral and social responsibility to integrate sustainability into its operations, events, and decision-making processes.

The creation of a Sustainability and Green Initiatives Committee within the Students' Union will ensure continued commitment to environmental sustainability and best practices.

All Union events and activities should be planned with sustainability at the forefront, ensuring responsible waste management, ethical sourcing, and eco-friendly policies.

Collaborating with RGU leadership, local councils, and sustainability-focused organisations can enhance the impact and reach of green initiatives.

## **WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?**

Establish a Sustainability and Green Initiatives Committee (SGIC) within the Union, comprising students, representatives, and sustainability advocates, to oversee the Union's environmentally friendly policies and initiatives.

Ensure all Union events and operations adhere to eco-friendly principles, such as waste reduction, ethical procurement, energy efficiency, and sustainable catering.

Implement a "Green Events Policy" requiring all student-led activities and campaigns to minimise environmental impact and promote sustainability.

Enhance education and engagement on sustainability by hosting workshops, awareness campaigns, and collaborative projects with environmental organisations.

Work towards a Sustainability Pledge, where students and staff commit to adopting greener habits, such as responsible waste disposal, sustainable travel, and ethical consumption.



## **MOTION 2**

### **STUDENT WELFARE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

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#### **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?**

Recognising the growing importance of student well-being, this motion seeks to increase mental health and student support services funding at Robert Gordon University.

#### **WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?**

The pressures of academic life, and financial burdens can have a significant impact on students' mental health.

#### **WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?**

The Union should work to introduce additional mental health workshops, stress management programs, and enhance existing peer support initiatives.

The Union should advocate for a 24/7 mental health helpline for urgent student support.

The Students' Union should work with the University support services to advocate for increased funding for on-campus counselling services, ensuring timely and accessible mental health support for all students.



## **MOTION 3**

### **EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT AND REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE STUDENTS' UNION**

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#### **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?**

Expanding career development programs will ensure students are well-supported throughout their studies and adequately prepared for life after graduation.

#### **WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?**

Post-graduation uncertainties can have a significant impact on students' mental health and wellbeing.

#### **WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?**

A 'Career Development' representative role or committee should be created within the Students' Union to:

Work alongside the University to oversee the implementation of career development programs.

Ensure that student voices are at the heart of shaping policies and support services.

Work closely with the university administration to secure additional external funding and sponsorships for student support programs.

Advocate for more student-led career mentorship initiatives, pairing students with industry professionals and alumni for guidance, including development of more opportunities for paid and unpaid internships, work placements, and research assistant roles to help students gain practical experience.

Deliver workshops focused on CV writing, job applications, interview preparation, and entrepreneurship.



## **MOTION 4**

### **ADVOCATING FOR AI INTEGRATION INTO ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENTS**

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#### **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming education, offering tools that enhance learning, research, and assessment. Universities worldwide are increasingly adopting AI to improve academic support, streamline assessments, and enhance student learning experiences. Ethical and responsible AI use is essential to ensure academic integrity and fairness in assessments. RGU students should benefit from AI-driven educational tools while maintaining academic excellence and ethical standards.

#### **WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?**

AI should be used as a learning aid to support research, coursework, and skill development rather than as a tool for academic dishonesty.

The university should develop clear guidelines on the ethical use of AI in assessments and coursework. Students should be provided with AI literacy training to understand and effectively use AI-driven academic tools.

AI can help personalize learning experiences, improve feedback mechanisms, and provide additional academic support.

#### **WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?**

Union representatives should work with the University and advocate for the integration of AI tools into academic development programs, including:

1. AI-assisted tutoring, research support, and automated feedback systems.
2. Work with the university to develop clear policies on the ethical use of AI in coursework, assessments, and research.
3. Organise AI literacy workshops for students to understand how to leverage AI tools responsibly in academic settings.
4. Ensure that the Students' Union engages in discussions with faculty and administrators to ensure AI policies are student-friendly and promote fairness in assessment.
5. Support research and pilot projects on AI-enhanced education to explore innovative learning methods while maintaining academic integrity.



**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS  
ABOUT TODAY'S MOTIONS,  
THE AGM OR UNION  
ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL,  
PLEASE CONTACT**

**BRYAN  
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PRESIDENT COMMUNICATION  
& DEMOCRACY**

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