Accountability Panel Record

3rd December, 5pm – Hybrid

Attendance

**Panel Members**

Sophie Foley (AU Executive Committee)

Imy Whitehead (AU Executive Committee)

Zena Al-Essawi (Heath Park Executive Committee)

Hanifa Ali (Heath Park Executive Committee)

Jivisha Aggarwal (International Executive Committee)

Deeshka Venkatesh (International Executive Committee)

Izaak Wilfrid Morris (Postgraduate Executive Committee)

Tomos Stokes (Postgraduate Executive Committee)

Jason Sze (Societies, Volunteering and Media Executive Committee)

Owain Siôn (Welsh Executive Committee)

**Also in attendance:**

Tali Atvars (Head of Student Voice and Advice)

Hannah Fatkin (Deputy Head of Student Voice)

Sophie Louden (Democracy and Projects Coordinator)

Welcome, Introductions, and Information

All panel members were given the opportunity to introduce themselves.

Tali Atvars (Head of Student Voice and Advice) provided information to the panel about the process of the meeting, and how it would be conducted.

Question Planning

Panel members were given the opportunity to discuss and decide upon questions to ask the first three Sabbatical Officers. It was noted that these needed to be related to the Officers’ roles, their manifestos, and Union policy, and would be added to a compulsory question for all Officers asking for a brief overview of their work so far this year.

Micaela Panes, VP Postgraduate Students (Education and Welfare)

This section of the panel was chaired by the representatives from the Postgraduate Executive Committee.

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| **Compulsory Question: Give us a brief overview of what you have been working on.**  Most work is a continuation from having the same role last year, including building postgraduate communities, running postgraduate events, and reporting on the experience of postgraduate research students who teach.  Additional work is being done on Union policy, including supporting the sexual violence working group and lobbying for more postgraduate study space. Securing the first postgraduate mentor scheme was a big win, as was working on policy regarding relationships between staff and postgraduate students. |
| **Question 1: How do you ensure the visibility of postgraduate events?**  Social media is used quite heavily, as well as screens in the Students’ Union and sending out targeted email communications. The Executive Committee could be brought into this to boost the visibility further. |
| **Question 2: How are you encouraging postgraduate students to get involved in society and sports events?**  Attending the Freshers Fairs supported this, and some work has been done on securing Postgraduate Officers across committees, as well as postgraduate-targeted events and Give It A Go events hosted by student groups. |
| **Question 3: What progress have you made regarding your support of postgraduate tutors and demonstrators?**  A lot of work has been done on this, and schools were targeted who were not abiding by the new policy. Certain schools removed teaching opportunities for PhD students, so getting these reinstated has been a focus, including working with external unions. It looks like this problem is not going away, so a lot of preventative measure is being taken, including working with senior university staff. The motion submitted to the recent AGM also shows that this is a topic that is of interest to the wider student community. |
| **Question 4: What is being done to promote the reporting systems for harassment such as the new report and support system, particularly for postgraduates who experience harassment?**  The university does have a communication plan, although this has been very slow and arguably not enough is being done. This will continue to be a priority and there is more the Students’ Union can do to push this with the university. The initial results of such processes are starting to come through, and hopefully progress will continue. |
| **Question 5: What are you doing to boost Welsh language provision at postgraduate level?**  It has been raised that there is a disparity in postgraduates being allocated Welsh-language tutors, which appears to be due to the lack of Welsh-speaking tutors available across the university. There has been some collaboration with the VP Cymraeg on this.  Work is also being done with postgraduate research students who teach to ensure if they are a Welsh speaker, they are not being given huge workloads by schools who wish to utilise these skills without further compensation. |
| **Question 6: Please provide a summary of your plans for the rest of the year.**  The aim is to leave the role in a positive position for the next VP Postgraduate, so the next individual will be equipped to succeed. A high proportion of the role is related to research students, and so ensuring everything is set up is important just in case the next elected candidate does not have knowledge in this area. |

Georgia Spry, VP Sports and Athletic Union President

This section of the panel was chaired by the representatives from the AU Executive Committee.

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| **Compulsory Question: Give us a brief overview of what you have been working on.**  The main projects are centred on restructuring the committee training processes, including introducing new, relevant sessions. There was also the campaign delivered around consent, encouraging a culture change within student groups.  Some time has been allocated to consistently going into training sessions to highlight some club activity, and club of the month has been brought back to recognise positive work. Sober Socials Week was also reintroduced this year, and lots of events were run across different groups. |
| **Question 1: Will bystander training be made compulsory for all committee members, and not just select committee members?**  That would be ideal, but as there are so many committee members, capacity is the concern. The main areas and roles have been targeted where the training will have the most impact but the aim is still to expand it. |
| **Question 2: What wellbeing support is provided to committee members?**  All committee members can access support from the Athletic Union team and Students’ Union. Throughout the year, this message is reinforced via social media and other communications, as wellbeing is so important. As well as Winter Wellbeing, there is ongoing collaboration with the Mental Health Officer. |
| **Question 3: What is being done to encourage clubs to engage in First Aid training?**  This does need to be requested and paid for, but it is something that can be reviewed. Higher capacity bookings can be made directly, and high-risk clubs can request more in-depth training if they feel this is necessary. |
| **Question 4: Within your aims regarding EDI, are you working with the Accessibility Officer?**  Not currently. It has been a struggle to get engagement from clubs to promote the disability sport campaign, as has been delivered in previous years. If this improves, the plan would be to collaborate. |
| **Question 5: How do you balance finance provision across both BUCS and non-BUCS clubs?**  BUCS clubs do get certain areas paid for by Students’ Union because they have higher fees and often larger commitments. We do have a free grants system and lots of non-BUCS clubs do request that. There have been discussions with staff about resources and finances, and there will be some discussion about reducing some of the costs where possible for non-competing clubs. |
| **Question 6: Is there anything being done to include more sports, such as kickboxing, in clubs?**  As the Chair for the Welsh Student Sport Group, and a participant of the BUCS Advisory Group, this is raised often. It is a lengthy process, but it is raised regularly. |
| **Question 7: What is being done to encourage postgraduate involvement in sports?**  Postgraduate students often believe they cannot join groups, but there is work being done on this misconception. There has been attention paid towards some specific sessions with specific clubs, requesting spots reserved during events for postgraduate students. Within the tier system for sports and societies, there is a requirement to have a postgraduate representative on the committee to reach silver. This has been ongoing work with the current VP Postgraduate. |
| **Question 8: What work is being done with Cardiff University sport to improve sports facilities?**  There is awareness of the leaks in Talybont sport facilities. When these first happened, a complaint was made, and this is consistently being mentioned to relevant university staff. This will continue to be raised, along with the issues around Wednesday afternoon timetabling. |

Eve Chamberlain, VP Societies, Volunteering and Media

This section of the panel was chaired by the representatives from the Societies, Volunteering and Media Executive Committee.

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| **Compulsory Question: Give us a brief overview of what you have been working on.**  Worked on refreshing committee training with the VP Sports and AU President, which included the introduction of bystander training. Attending Freshers Fairs was a priority, as well as supporting 13 new societies this year. Clean Back Cardiff has been brought back, as well as Pink Week, Sober Socials Week, and Winter Wellbeing.  There has been involvement in the work being done by the sexual violence working group, including attendance at conferences. The Winter Showcase and Societies Forum were both hosted, as well as planning towards LGBTQ+ History Month. There is also some work being done to review potential termly society memberships for postgraduate students. |
| **Question 1: What are you doing towards postgraduate integration in societies?**  As per the tier system, society committees need to have a postgraduate rep, with the aim of helping postgraduate students feel welcome. The hope is to implement termly memberships for postgraduate students starting in January. There are also postgraduate events included in the Winter Wellbeing campaign. |
| **Question 2: Will you introduce more in-depth and in person bystander training?**  Have been in contact with the university about their online training, and want to be part of the conversation to make that training more accessible. The budget is not necessarily there, but making it mandatory continues to be a priority. |
| **Question 3: How are you going to raise awareness for volunteering groups?**  Volunteering Week will be in February. The aim is to get feedback from groups to see how they would best benefit from activity during this week, and how they can be advertised. The Executive Commitee will be used to help formulate ideas. |
| **Question 4: What is being done to safeguard committee members?**  There is training for Wellbeing Officers in place, and there will be some comms coming up about prioritising wellbeing across groups. |
| **Question 5: Will there be more grant funding for societies?**  Yes, there will be more in the second semester. The exact amount available cannot be confirmed at this point, but this should give groups an extra chance to access funding. |
| **Question 6: What measures are taken to ensure inclusivity for international students?**  The plan is to hold the Culture Cwtch for cultural societies again this year, to raise and celebrate all cultures. Some events during the Winter Wellbeing campaign are also targeted towards international students as well. |
| **Question 7: What scope has there been for you and other officers to work together towards general union campaigns and university accountability, and what have you personally done as a part of this?**  There was a townhall event with the Vice-Chancellor. As a team it was discussed in advance what needed to be raised. There is also ongoing work towards protecting student parking permits. |
| **Question 8: Has there been much work done to promote and draw attention to inclusion of Welsh language in the tiering system?**  This was advertised in committee training, with information about translation services and lots of groups encouraged to make use of it. There has been some effort to produce regular phrases societies might use, but more work could be done on promoting this. |
| **Question 9: Can you provide a quick summary of what is coming up next semester?**  There will be Refreshers Fair, LGBTQ+ History Month, Culture Cwtch, Dance Varsity, and Pride, among others. |

Break

Question Planning

Panel members were given further opportunity to discuss and decide upon questions to ask the next three Sabbatical Officers. It was noted that these needed to be related to the Officers’ roles, their manifestos, and Union policy, and would be added to a compulsory question for all Officers asking for a brief overview of their work so far this year.

Ana Nagiel Escobar, VP International Students (Education and Welfare)

This section of the panel was chaired by the representatives from the International Executive Committee.

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| **Compulsory Question: Give us a brief overview of what you have been working on.**  A core manifesto point was regarding family discounts of up to 10% of fees for international students, and this is ongoing. Black History Month has passed, but there if further work towards extending the work on anti-racism throughout the whole year. The Global Campus campaign launch is expected to be the end of January.  Planning for Ramadan celebrations is on the agenda, as well as contributing towards race equality and the previous policy passed regarding fossil free careers. |
| **Question 1: As a new full-time Sabbatical Officer role, how do you feel your role is integrating into the rest of team?**  Had positive and comprehensive training for the role, and the Freshers period was very helpful for understanding the scope of the role. The goal for this year is to provide a strong foundation for the next person to take on the role, so they can continue to develop the scope of the role. |
| **Question 2: What actions are being taken to promote inclusivity of societies?**  Not involved in committee training but working on planning for the Culture Cwtch. |
| **Question 3: What is being done regarding family discount?**  Research is currently being done, with information being gathered from other organisations across the UK. There are positive reflections from universities who already provide this. The progress at the moment is still in the data-collection phase. |
| **Question 4: What is being done to promote and increase Language for All provision?**    This has not been a priority thus far, and knowledge of the scheme is limited. It would be positive to boost the language cafe, and it is definitely something to think about. |
| **Question 5: What is being done to make the Global Campus campaign idea truly inclusive? Most of the plan is religious events.**  The plan for this year is focused on cultural events such as Ramadan, Halloween, and the Culture Cwtch. Religion is a huge part of culture, and there is some reliance on societies to communicate what is happening. |
| **Question 6: What scope has there been for you and other officers had to work together towards general union campaigns and university accountability, and what have you personally done as apart of this?**  There has been a focus on ensuring university estate and sports facilities are fit for purpose. Working on getting more Heath-based students on board with activity, although there is still some learning to do to understand how the role fits in. |

Shola Bold, VP Heath Park (Education and Welfare)

This section of the panel was chaired by the representatives from the Heath Park Executive Committee, with the support of the Postgraduate Executive Committee.

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| **Compulsory Question: Give us a brief overview of what you have been working on.**  During Freshers, a lot of hard work went into ensuring events were available at both the Heath Park campus and Cathays campus, aimed specifically at Heath Park students. A bus was introduced to provide transport for students between campuses for that period, which was very successful.  Various campaigning has been ongoing, including for Feed Your Flat, Black History Month, and around student parking permits. There has also been some planning towards Heath Park On Tour and Placement Packs. |
| **Question 1: Are you going to bring more freshers’ events to the Heath?**  It was nice to see postgrads and other students at the campus, and for them to see the campus as an extension of their space. In comparison to previous years where not much had happened, there was a lot more this year. There were also collaborations with other Sabbatical Officers, and it was nice to give those a go. Not all events were busy, but it was important to provide options for Heath Park students. |
| **Question 2: What have you done in terms of improving the array of food options at the Heath Park campus?**  This has not been a focus. There are plans to run a campaign around cheaper lunch options on campus. Feed Your Flat also runs at the Heath Park campus. One cohort were particularly struggling with finance and accessing affordable food, so to be able to deliver Feed Your Flat during that time was positive.  The first meeting with the Heath Park Executive Committee did see halal food options raised as a concern. This has been fed back up to members of university staff and more will be done. This will be ongoing for a while but will continue to be a priority. |
| **Question 3: What have you been doing to bring more prayer/quiet rooms to the Heath?**  The lack of prayer rooms was highlighted by the Executive Committee as a problem. University staff have been contacted, and they are hoping to find suitable rooms that can be transformed. In the new years, the aim is to ensure there is progress on this, as it is a pressing issue. |
| **Question 4: How often do you personally run events and campaigns on Heath Park campus? This includes going to the campus to represent the students there.**  Regularly, and this includes going for campaigns such as Winter Wellbeing. This does depend what is on and where attention is needed, but the aim is to continue to deliver and grow campaigns, including at the Heath Park campus. |
| **Question 5: So far in your role, what have you done to work alongside the other Sabbatical Officers to promote and work on general Students’ Union business and the representation of all students. And how have you worked to ensure the University makes changes for the benefit of all students, such as through University committees?**  Working on Feed Your Flat, Winter Wellbeing, and Revision Aid which is coming up in January. There have also been a range of committees to attend. |
| **Question 6: What is being done to connect the Cathays campus and Heath Park Campus? Would it be possible to extend the Uni Hall bus route? You mentioned this as part of your manifesto.**  When elected, the hope was that there would be a regular route. Entering the role, there is a realisation that these things are not always possible. There was some compromise through discussing the transport that is available, and at busy times, using a minibus to make events accessible. It is not a full service, but these are steps in the right direction. There are ongoing discussions about the scope of such transport, and the possibility of introducing this service in the future. |
| **Question 7: What is being done to reach out and collaborate with medical representative bodies such as HCSA and BMA regarding issues such as the parking permit withdrawals affecting medical students on placement?**  There is a plan to write to BMA regarding the student parking permit issue. This communication is solely regarding parking at the moment. |
| **Question 8: Has much work been done to lobby the council for Cardiff Bus themselves to create a bus route for students? For example, Cardiff Met has a similar bus connection for students.**  This has not been something discussed with the council yet, but this can be looked into. |

Catrin Edith Parry, VP Cymraeg

This section of the panel was chaired by the representatives from the Welsh Executive Committee.

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| **Compulsory Question: Give us a brief overview of what you have been working on.**  I has been a busy few months. The biggest manifesto point was to strengthen the link between Y Gym Gym and the Students’ Union, and proud to say that has gone very well. There has been a huge difference. During Freshers week, a Welsh music gig was arranged a for the first time in the Students’ Union. Held a taster session about Welsh history, culture and language.  A priority has been representing Welsh students’ voices, and advocating for Welsh-speaking students who wish to study in their first language. The Alright Mate campaign focusing on men’s mental health was delivered, and Taf Talks were created. |
| **Question 1: What is being done to promote postgraduate access to the Welsh language in the extracurricular and academic sense?**  Have heard a lot from postgraduate students, and there is a widespread lack of support given when they have asked for personal tutors who are Welsh-speaking. This has been an ongoing issue being worked through alongside the VP Postgraduate, and has caused a lot of anger. There is also a hope to run more postgraduate-specific events for Welsh speakers, to see what will work well and to bring the community together in the new year. |
| **Question 2: What are you doing to improve Welsh-language provision in sports clubs and societies?**  It is part of the tier system for societies and sports clubs to make use of the Welsh language, and this has been picked up a lot more recently. The VP Sports has been promoting this a lot. This could probably be promoted more, and can be worked on into the next semester. |
| **Question 3: What is being done to promote inclusion within Welsh societies for second-language Welsh speakers?**  This has been on the radar for a while. There is the Welsh society, but there is also UMCC. It may need a bit of a rebrand, but that is the place to find Welsh learners. If you are learning the language, it can be daunting to join Y Gym Gym. This needs to be discussed with the committee, but there are plans to arrange a coffee morning event for learners. |
| **Question 4: What is being done in terms of improving Cardiff University and the Students’ Union’s visibility at Welsh cultural events?**  Cardiff University do not see the same presence at cultural events, but we do not show ourselves off as some other universities in Wales do. This has been brought up with university staff and committees, and they appreciated it being voiced, but money was often cited as an issue. It is not that a big step is required, but little things that will help significantly are not being done. The hope is that this message is sinking in. |
| **Question 5: What actions have been taken to improve the relationship between the Students’ Union and Y Gym Gym, and what are the challenges with that relationship?**  The Welsh society historically has not had a good relationship with the Students’ Union, and this was the main motivation to run for the VP Cymraeg position. There have been lots of conversations with the Activities team about how to strengthen this relationship. Lots of Cardiff Met students joined the society previously and so one issue was to consider how this would be managed, and this is now being worked through. The committee went to committee training, and although it has required someone to be the person in the middle, it is working well and will hopefully continue. |
| **Question 6: Is there still a division between UMCC and the Welsh Executive Committee?**  All UMCC committee members are members of the Welsh Executive Committee. They were nominated through the selection process, and this felt like the natural way forward. The UMCC committee then further help to arrange social events and bring fresh ideas on what they want to see next for UMCC. Having this committee also on the Welsh Executive Committee helps to bring a range of different voices and opinions to the table. |
| **Question 7: What is being done to diversify the Welsh societies?**  This has been looked at recently, as UMCC is a group that needs a little guidance on their purpose, especially as there is also a Welsh society. Y Gym Gym is seen as the society where most Welsh speakers engage, but it is also largely associated with socials, especially around drinking. There was a discussion with a group of students recently to start a ‘Twmpath’ society, a form of Welsh folk dancing. |

Panel Discussion

The panel was invited to discuss the responses of each Sabbatical Officer, and especially highlight one area they would like to commend the Officer for, as well as one area that they would recommend the Officer focuses on moving forward.

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| **Micaela Panes – VP Postgraduate Students (Education and Welfare)**  The panel chose to highlight the positive work done so far towards improving PGR student support, including specifically on PGRs who teach and their contracts.  The panel recommended that moving forward, focus was given towards continued work on securing postgraduate study spaces, and improving the quality of education for all postgraduate students. |
| **Georgia Spry – VP Sports and Athletic Union President**  The panel chose to highlight the ongoing communication with clubs, and the Consent campaign.  The panel recommended that moving forward, focus was given towards direct support for committee members through initiatives such as wellbeing events. |
| **Eve Chamberlain – VP Societies and Volunteering**  The panel chose to highlight the campaigns that have been delivered or planned so far this year.  The panel recommended that moving forward, focus was given towards more solid action on inclusivity, and bringing awareness to volunteering groups. |
| **Ana Nagiel Escobar – VP International Students (Education and Welfare)**  The panel chose to highlight the work done on Black History Month.  The panel recommended that moving forward, focus was given towards Languages For All. |
| **Shola Bold – VP Heath Park (Education and Welfare)**  The panel chose to highlight Shola’s understanding of the varying needs of students, providing a welcoming environment for students, and the work done on Feed Your Flat.  The panel recommended that moving forward, focus was given towards pushing for change, and working on speeding up those processes beyond just contacting staff members. |
| **Catrin Edith Parry - VP Cymraeg**  The panel chose to highlight the improvement of the relationship between the Students’ Union and Y Gym Gym.  The panel recommended that moving forward, focus was given towards improving outreach with other societies that are not focused on Welsh-language activities, and engage with them and Welsh learners. |

Formal Notices

There were no Motions of Censure and no Notices of Required Improvement submitted for this Accountability Panel. The Panel were given the opportunity to discuss and vote upon any Notices of Satisfaction they wanted to apply.

Following discussion and voting, the following notices were approved:

1. **Notice of Satisfaction for VP Postgraduate Students (Education and Welfare)**

The reason this notice was applied was due to the ongoing work towards supporting PGR students, as well as the evident collaboration done with every other Sabbatical Officer (as noted through discussion with each Officer).

1. **Notice of Satisfaction for VP Sports and Athletic Union President**

The reason this notice was applied was due to the steps taken to improve the relationship between the Students’ Union and Y Gym Gym, and the evident success of this.

1. **Notice of Satisfaction for VP Cymraeg**

The reason this notice was applied was for the work put into, and the success of the Consent Campaign delivered over the semester.

Close

The panel were asked to submit any questions for the SU President via email, following their being unable to participate.