

ULSU Student Council

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27th May 2009

Open letter University of Lincoln Student Union

As Council has finished sitting for the Academic Year it falls upon me, as Chair, to write this letter and state the great disappointment caused by the current Executives failure to comply with mandates set by the Student Body. In particular regards to the last Council meeting where you were all tasked with the following duties:

Item 1:

The Executive failure to action Council motion 1 – Executive Committee to take a stance on the “No Platform” policy within **5 working days** of motion passing. (Deadline 29th April 2009)

Item 2:

The Executive failure to action Council motion 6 – Executive Committee to provide a fully written “No Platform” policy to this Council for discussion, electronically via email within **21 days** of this motion passing. (Deadline 13th May 2009)

All dates regards to this motion have passed and no response has been received regards to reasons for this failure. The Executive is mandated to take actions required by Student Council on behalf of the Student Body of the University. Any motion passed by Council is to be taken with priority action at all times. The failure to comply with this motion, and the failure to respond to reasonable requests for explanation is unacceptable.

The preferable option regards to this would be to call Council back into session to hold the Executive to account for this lack of action. Unfortunately, the regulations do not allow for Council to be called back after its last session of the academic year. The aim of this letter is to ensure that at least some of these issues are addressed prior to the next Council and so it is with no pleasure that I make the following open statements.

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Daniel Hutchinson, SU President

On numerous occasions over the last academic year I have had cause to speak to you regards to your skills and abilities as leader of the Student Union. These conversations have been to actively encourage you to take a firmer role with the Executive. By your repeated inability to do so the Executive has lost direction and focus resulting in a serious failure of the Executive to take action when required to do so. This motion is but an example of serial failures by your team (see appendix), resulting in disillusionment of the Student Body and damage to the reputation of the Union.

Recently, due to issues that I will not discuss in this letter, you have not been able to continue with your determination to alter this problem. Unfortunately, without setting up a firm line of succession within the Executive this lack of leadership has resulted in further failures.

The Executive

As students we elect a President as the person who will take lead responsibility for the running of the Union. Your recurrent refusal to accept Daniel as the person who sets tone for the Union has been the main cause resulting in the failure of the Executive. You were elected to professional roles which required that you act accordingly. Your response to your President and the wishes of the Student Body has damaged the reputation of this Union and is wholly unprofessional.

Those current officers that continue to work on the Executive next year will face a vote of censure at the next Council. These officers will at least have the chance to redeem themselves and show to students that they are worthy of the roles they were elected to. Those officers leaving will not

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have this chance so tarnishing their ability to look back with pride on their service to the Union, which is a great pity.

The Incoming Executive

Upon handover you will become responsible for the failings of the current Executive, this is unavoidable. It will make your time in office that much harder. Due to the issues left behind Council must ensure that any officers who fail to complete a duty, without reasonable excuse, are immediately held up for censure. Due to the actions of your predecessors there can be no leniency on this matter, so those who come under censure for a third time will automatically become the subject of a no-confidence vote.

As President, Christopher Charnley is the directional lead of the Union. He is also the main person that will be held to account for any further failings of the Executive. It will not be acceptable for any officer to use the defence of rules laid down by the Limited Companies Act to justify ignoring directions issued by the President. You are all jointly and separately liable under the law and you do have an equal vote in the running of the Union. What you must remember is that the President is elected by the Student Body to take lead, and failure to accept that he is there to coordinate and lead you, is to disregard students that elected you. Any unjustified refusal to adhere to his reasonable instruction or directions will not be held kindly by the Council. As has been so visibly apparent with the current Executive, such behaviour causes the breakdown of the team, its morale and is damaging to the Union. This cannot re-occur.

On assuming office, you will be required to ascertain what duties the current Executive have failed to complete. You will work as a matter of priority on Council directives outstanding - including the No Platform report should this not be submitted prior to hand over. A full report will then be required for advance submission to Council to decide on appropriate action.

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Review of regulations

An immediate review of regulations must take place to deal with the following issues brought to the fore on this matter.

1. An addendum that gives Council power to call an emergency session at any point of the academic year. As per The Trustees and the Executive regulations this should be given to the Chair or a united call from 50% of the Council.
2. A decision has to be made as to who takes on the role of holding the Executive to account once Council has ceased for the Summer Holidays. To leave the Executive unmonitored for a large portion of the fiscal year is something that needs to be addressed immediately.
3. One of Councils main duties is to hold the Executive to account. This is severely hindered by the quorum level of 15+1. There is no allowance for the removal of Executive vote from Council so they can be held to censure. Quorum level needs either to be reduced substantially to allow nonExecutive Council members to issue censure and still be quorate in exceptional circumstances, or Executive voting rights must be rescinded and more student members brought on board.
4. All Executive officers must be held to a high standard of professionalism with regards to their dealings with students and with co-workers. A full adoption of University policies must be enforced within the Union to ensure repeat of this year's action does not re-occur.
5. An official line of succession must be set to cover for absence of the President so that those duties are completed and the Union can continue unabated.

It is my hope that the issues will be quickly dealt with and the solutions implemented as a matter of priority. Also that all current Executive officers take on board what has been said and work with the Incoming Executive to redress the problems caused. The Executive needs to work as a team under a strong leader so that the Students Union can work to repair its damaged reputation.

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This letter is to be kept on Council record and placed on the Website for full Student access.

AMANDA DAVIDSON, CHAIR – STUDENT COUNCIL

Appendix ~Examples of Executive Mandate

Failures

Diversity Groups

In December 2008, it was highlighted to Council that there was a failure to represent the diversity groups within the Union. This issue was tasked to the Executive. In April 2009 the situation is still not rectified following Union attempts so the Council mandated the Executive to form a working group as a priority action.

Student membership of this working group has not been contacted to request their participation. This situation is now being monitored by the Universities Equality Group as a matter of concern and resulting in damage to the reputation of the Union.

Subcommittees

This is closely aligned with the issue of diversity groups. Attempts by the Executive to get student participation for semester B were under publicised, badly organised, and poorly subscribed. Due to this many subcommittees have failed to run this academic year.

Officer blogs

In February, the Executive was tasked with weekly blogs to be completed for student viewing. The communications officer was tasked with sending out a weekly portal message with the link so students could easily locate them.

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The April update to Council included statements from officers that they were completing their blogs. The communications officer was not present to ask about the failure to circulate the portal messages. Daniel Hutchinson was tasked with finding out why this instruction had not been complied with. No response has been received, and blogs are currently live but only one officer has regularly made entries.

Open voting rights

In February an Executive officer proposed open voting rights to all students at Council. The communications officer was tasked with initiating a survey within the Student Body to ascertain if this is something they would like. The survey was not completed.

“No Platform” policy

In April, the Council passed the first section of a “No Platform” policy. The Executive was tasked with specific, time sensitive duties regards to this. The main aim was to have them produce a policy detailing the exact manner in which a “No Platform” policy would work, and who would fall under its remit. The reason the time sensitive nature of this report was so that it could be released to the Student Body during the final semester. This would give students time to read the proposal, then make educated decisions that they could represent at the next Council. By failing to take the required action the Executive prevents the students from taking educated decisions relating to their own time at University. This shows a disregard for the aims and tenets of the Union, and brings the Union further into disrepute.